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*The
Living Voice*

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by
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TO MY SISTER MARGARET

This book belongs to you by right, for it was you who first told me of the tradition of Lord Derby's conversion as he rode to the scaffold. You suggested that I should make a story about it and showed me ancient letters—delved out of the store you are editing for publication—which introduced me to “good cosen Bradshaigh” the hero of my tale.

It was with you that I explored the “blessed little Isle of Ellan Vannin” in early spring. Together we climbed Snaefell and walked the peaceful solitudes, looking down on the cultivated land where the fields were divided by banks of flaming gorse. Everywhere the sea was visible, sometimes breaking in thunder on the rocky coast, sometimes a soft sheet of hazy water out of which the dim heights of Scotch, English, Welsh and Irish mountains rose up, diaphanous as moonlight.

You have helped me with your intimate knowledge of life in Stuart times—in fact your influence is woven into every line of this Lancashire tale, and so I write your name upon the first page.

NOTE

THE account of the conversion of James, seventh Earl of Derby, is based on the report in the "Annual Letters of the Society of Jesus" for 1652, in which it is expressly stated that the event was "*minime nota in vulgus*" (not commonly known); also on the Latin narrative, contemporary with the above report, a transcript of which is preserved in the Archives of Stonyhurst College. Father Cuthbert Clifton, S.J. (alias Norris), who received Lord Derby into the Church, was a scion of a well-known Lancashire family, whose descendants are still living at Clifton Hall.

A translation of the Stonyhurst transcript was published in the "Catholic Miscellany" for December, 1827, and is quoted in full in Latin and English in "Stanley Papers" (Chetham Society) Appendix IX.

The Living Voice

CHAPTER I

YOUNG Simon Bradshaigh was full of pride as he rode out with his mother on the pillion behind him. It was a pity that it should be the old black mare between his knees instead of the lively chestnut colt, the pride of the stable. But Mistress Bradshaigh was timorous, and though Simon was a good horseman for his twelve years, she positively refused to mount anything but good, fat, placid Peggy. There would be bands playing and huzzaing and no end of excitement, and doubtless a large and tumultuous crowd.

"I would like to see my Lord Strange ride away with his troopers," exclaimed little Roger jealously. "Why cannot my father go too, and take me before him on the saddle?"

"He has no permit to travel more than five miles from home, thou knowest," returned the elder brother condescendingly. "And 'tis ten miles to Knowsley—thou hast never rid so far."

"Why doesn't our father go to fight for the King against the Scots?" persisted Roger.

"Because Catholics cannot bear arms—that is to say they cannot carry swords nor that."

"Why not?"

"Because—well, because there's a law to fine them if they do. Oh, look! Is not our mother comely in my Grandmother's black velvet?"

Simon dragged the mare's head up from the tufts of grass at which she was tearing, and urged her close to the mountingblock. He was quivering with excitement as he helped his mother on to the pillion. For it was a great day. Lord Strange was to ride out from Knowsley at the head of three thousand armed men, all tenants, raised on his father's vast estates in Lancashire and Cheshire. And was not Lord Strange Simon's own particular hero? How he longed to follow him to war and glory! Other boys, little older than himself accompanied their fathers as pages or horse-boys but Simon and his sire, passionately devoted to the crown though they might be, must stay at home and till the land like all their Catholic neighbors.

Mistress Bradshaigh guessed at what was passing in her son's heart.

"There's Lydiate," she remarked, glancing towards the timbered mansion when they were about halfway to their destination. "Whisper a prayer, child, for Our Lord is near. Mr. Barlow lies there this sennight and wherever he bides, there is Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. Oh, Simon, we are indeed blest to have such a holy priest in our midst."

The boy assented, kicking the old mare into a canter, which made his mother clutch at his waist.

"Not so fast, the road is rough—aye, Catholics should be ever singing Te Deums in their hearts, for God has chosen them and cherishes them—He has said to us: 'I will be with you all days'."

"There's one thing puzzles me," said Simon, twisting perilously in the saddle in order to look at her as they jogged along. "My Lord Strange believes in Our Lord's

presence in the Blessed Sacrament, my father says—why isn't he a Catholic then? Or is he a sort of Catholic too?"

"I will try to explain," returned his mother. "Go softly till we reach the great lodge. You know that the Holy Church is the mystical body of Christ? The Church has got her living and visible body of which you and I and all true believing Catholics are part, if so be they are not in mortal sin—for such are dead to Christ."

"Yes, I understand that," agreed the boy.

"But there are others who believe the word of God, and live according to His precepts, and respond with all their might to the grace which God graciously vouchsafes to them, but their minds are blinded by the errors in which they have been educated. Yet, if they are in good faith, and have been baptized, they also are within the ark of the Church although they know it not."

"How is anyone to discern what is right then?" asked Simon. "Why must you and my father suffer all these things for being Catholic if my lord will be saved just the same and is so well off?"

She smiled, somewhat sadly.

"We know what is right," she answered, "because Jesus Christ will never leave His Church unto the end of the world. And He has given to her a living voice, by which she shall continually and forever teach all nations. And that voice is the voice of Peter and of his successor, the Pope."

"But Lord Strange and the Archbishops and folk call the Pope bad names," objected Simon. "Can they be saved just the same as us?"

"God is just," declared Mary Bradshaigh. "And to every created soul He gives the choice of good or evil. So we must pray much for your father's friend, dear heart. He hath a right intention but he cannot as yet hear the

living voice of Christ and you and I can hear it. So that we always know what is right and must see we living accordingly."

"The living voice," repeated the boy musingly. "That's when the Pope speaks *ex cathedra*."

They had now approached the great ironwork gates of one of the chief entrances to Knowsley Park, which stood hospitably open. The black mare trotted through and joined the long train of horsemen and ladies who were passing up the avenue to see the show.

The broad green sward before the house was crowded with men in breastplates and steel caps, with flying shoulder knots of the Stanley colors, while the foot soldiers, drawn up further off, all wore the Derby livery. Not quite a third part of the little army was present. Some had already gone forward on the road to York and others awaited their leader at Ormskirk and Bolton.

The steps of the house were crowded with men of fashion and ladies in the brilliant garments affected by those of the royalist persuasion in contradistinction to the sober clothing which the puritans considered the only "godly" wear. There was my Lady Strange, flashing in gold tinsel cloth, all wrought with pearl and amber, her children clustered about her, the boys in gay slashed doublets, the girls with bare necks and long robes of scarlet and sky-blue silk. And there was my Lord himself! Simon's heart beat faster as he gazed. James, Lord Strange, the heir of the House of Stanley, had already entered into his possessions, for his father, the infirm and widowed Earl of Derby, had retired to a small estate near Chester.

He was a man of middle height, and looked broader than usual in the thick padded surcoat he wore under the shining greaves of his armor.

Lord Strange wore his own dark brown hair, which

grew in a heavy mane, covering his low, broad forehead to the eyebrows and hanging down upon his shoulders. He held his plumed hat in his hand and stood gazing sadly at his soldiers, for he was no man of war and the camp and field held no charms for him. He had his own share of pride, however, particularly that pride which acknowledges and honors ancestral descent. His heart swelled with triumph as he thought how great a host he was bringing to the aid of the King.

Mistress Bradshaigh bade her son pause on the outskirts of the throng. His lordship's household numbered some two hundred souls, and more than half of these were busy, dispensing the lavish hospitality which was a tradition of the family. Ale in great leather tankards was passed about among the common people, wine in silver cups and flagons was served to the gentry and immense bowls of syllabub and syrup were being ladled out for all and sundry.

Ever and anon a captain or an ensign on a dancing charger would ride up to the steps, dismount and, bowing low, present the tally of his troop to the commander. Lord Strange seemed to have a friendly word for each, and laughed often, though his face quickly fell into grave lines again.

Mistress Bradshaigh was recognized presently by various friends and neighbors who had likewise come to see the pageant. Others she knew by sight and pointed out to her son. There were a good score of Catholic landowners present, all looking somewhat shabby and down-in-the-mouth, unarmed and poorly mounted among the brilliant throng in gleaming breastplates, swaggering to show off their long pointed swords and jeweled poniards.

Old Mr. Nevile from Greenhalgh was present on his gray palfrey. He had a permit which allowed him to travel beyond his five mile bounds for this one occasion.

He rode about bidding the Catholics to take heed to scatter themselves among the crowd.

"If we are seen gathered together there will surely be some person of ill-will to accuse my lord of intriguing with papists," he declared. "Though he has warm friends—God be praised—he has also bitter enemies."

In the paved court long tables had been set forth, whereon great pasties were being cut up and wonderful towers of cake and pastry were being rapidly demolished. The old Squire marked that Simon's eyes wandered in this direction. In truth the fare at home was plain and sometimes scanty and the boy was sharp-set with the morning ride.

"Dame Julian will be sore disappointed unless she have a word with you, Mistress," he observed. "There she is yonder with our grandson at her bridle. If you will come aside out of the press, Dick will stand by your horse and I would fain borrow this young man of yours to lend me his arm while I partake of some slight refreshment."

Simon sat up very straight, reddening with pride at the Squire's respectful tone. He did not intercept the smile which his mother exchanged with the old gentleman.

The white-haired lady of Greenhalgh and her younger friend had time for plenty of talk before Simon reappeared, pushing a way through the crowd for Sir Richard to follow.

"That is a fine lad of yours, neighbor," he began, but at this moment a trumpet sounded. It was blown from the steps by my Lord's own bugler, and the notes were immediately taken up all over the great park.

"Boot and saddle," was the call, and instantly the tumult of talk was still. A sudden silence fell, broken only by the light jingle of bit and stirrup and then

again the silver voices of the trumpets rang out. There was a concerted movement all over the vast assembly; rainbow colors heaved and flashed like a field of tulips tossing in the wind. Then every man was in the saddle, orders rang out, ranks were dressed. Tears of excitement stood in Simon's eyes as he stood, perched precariously, with one foot in the stirrup.

My Lord Strange was mounting his great white charger—it plunged and his heavy hair flew up about his shoulders.

Oh now, the bugles were sounding the advance! Away, away they would ride, these hundreds of gallant men, to fight for their King—that King whose beautiful sad face was so well known from portrait and coin. To Simon, War seemed like a poem of flashing color and beauty. He associated no idea of death or suffering with this gallant throng. They were riding for the King and glory! What heart would not bound at the thought!

And now the white charger was turned slowly from the steps, away from the noble lady and the group of children. Lord Strange rode forth at the head of his men. Behind him came the color party with the King's Standard and the Derby banner side by side, and then with a sound like a storm wind the battalions formed marching order and the dust from prancing hoofs rose up in a great dun cloud.

A cheer arose, taken up tempestuously in every part of the crowd.

"À Derby, à Derby! God save the House of Stanley!"

"God save the King," cried Lord Strange, his voice sounding thin after the uproar.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" The shouts rang out anew.

Company after company fell into line—they were going, nay, they were already gone! The odor of crushed grass filled the air, and the dust still hovered, dimming

the Spring sunshine as it hung like a pall, above the noble house.

Simon wept, hiding his face in the black mare's scrubby mane, because he might not bear a sword nor draw it for the King.

CHAPTER II

MOOR GRANGE had been in the possession of the Bradshaighs ever since the reign of the third Edward. The family had owned wide possessions in those days, but from the time of bluff King Hal, onwards, their land had been taken from them piecemeal by fines and sequestrations until there remained but the old house itself and a cluster of tenant farms in a ring fence about it. King James of pious memory had had the happy thought of wiping out a debt to the Crown by empowering each of his creditors to take what was owed him from a Catholic neighbor. And as the Squire Bradshaigh of that day was unable to pay down a thousand golden angels on demand, he was harassed for many a long year and paid his Sovereign's debt piecemeal over and over again. It was fifteen years since Charles I had come to the throne, and though his reign had so far been a period of comparative peace for Catholic recusants, the country itself could scarcely have been in a more unstable condition.

Honest Squire Bradshaigh only asked to be allowed to farm his own land and bring up his five children in tranquillity. He was noted on the Court Rolls as an "obstinate recusant," and he worked with his own hands when protestant husbandmen were at rest, that he might lay by sufficient to pay the monthly fines and double

taxes exacted from a papist. He could have done better at his business too, could he have had free access to the rising seaport of Liverpool, but being like most Catholic landowners, forbidden to travel further than five miles from his house, which was situated at double that distance from the town, he was obliged to depend upon the agency of his delicate wife, or upon such Protestant acquaintances as were willing to act for him.

The old hall was partly stone-built, partly of brick and timber. It comprised a variety of styles as each succeeding squire had added a portion to accommodate the increasing family.

Squire Roger had come early into his inheritance on his father's death, but his mother and his two sisters still lived in the house, and young cousins came frequently and unexpectedly to stay when their own families were in trouble.

"God will care for us," the Squire would cheerfully remark, with a backward longing look at his book, as he hurried forth to provide for the newcomers, by hook and line in his fish-ponds, by the slaughter of a pig, or by his gun. "God will take care of us to be sure! Keep the children to their books, Molly—except Simon—the lad had best come with me."

Simon was early inured to manual labor and to field sports. Sometimes the guest would be the priest who had charge of the district. Father Barlow the Benedictine moved about the country in lay attire, living now with one Catholic landowner, now with another—careful to change his quarters often, for fear of bringing danger upon his hosts. Moor Grange was one of his chief resorts as the Squire had a powerful friend and was less likely to be molested than his neighbors.

This friend—James, Lord Strange, held almost royal sway in Lancashire. Though the Squire had not been educated at Knowsley, like the sons of many of the

country gentry, by reason of the obstinate recusancy of the Bradshaigh family, the two men had become intimate early in life and had been thrown much together in the late troublous times. They did not always think alike, for Squire Bradshaigh approved the reforms of the Long Parliament, and Lord Strange, who was heart and soul in favor of absolute monarchy, deplored the aggression—as he termed it—of the Commons. In religion he was a follower of Laud, though without the Primate's inveterate desire to hunt down those who disagreed with him. He was a man of overpowering enthusiasms, and one, who having once formed a judgment, rarely changed it.

Warm-hearted Roger Bradshaigh was of a different type. He was cautious of taking sides in any political discussion, as were almost all Catholics of that day. He disapproved the instability of the King's decisions, and his lack of adherence to any given principle, except the principle that on all occasions the King's will should be absolute. Like all Lancashiremen Roger was a stickler for rights, and he honored the rights of others without being unmindful of his own.

Lord Strange was a friend and admirer of his kinsman Strafford and though deeply dissatisfied with his own treatment at Court, imputed it to the jealousy of rivals and exonerated the King from blame. In 1638 he retreated to the Lancashire demesne, and from thence he was summoned in the following year to attend the King's Council at York. He rode forth as has been described, at the head of his levies, with fifes and drums playing, colors flying and a ribbon of the Derby colors in every cap.

The news letters were more eagerly looked for than ever, for Parliament was in session, the turbulent Presbyterian party was in the ascendant and Catholics feared that new troubles were at hand.

Mr. Bradshaigh employed a certain person of his own persuasion in the metropolis to write the weekly account, sending it down by such means as offered. Mr. Rigby was obliged to be discreet and of late the paper had had to be held to the fire ere its true meaning could be deciphered.

One March day, of blue sky, on which great clouds sailed like galleons urged forward by a gusty wind, the Squire hastened in from the field, not even pausing to scrape the clay from his gaiters.

"Molly—Molly, my love," he called. "Quick, light a faggot—here's bad news I fear me."

"Dear to be sure, if the man hasn't used thick paper again," complained Mistress Bradshaigh. "You will have to pay ninepence for that, and he could have told as much news for sixpence."

The secret message, written with lemon juice between the lines brought ill tidings enough. A new edict had been passed by which all priests and Jesuits were banished from the kingdom: those who remained after the seventh of April laid themselves open to the full and terrible penalties of the law. Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury and the King's great friend had been flung into the Tower and Strafford impeached.

Bradshaigh's face grew more and more troubled. My Lord Strafford was a kinsman of the Stanleys and had been visiting at Knowsley only a few months earlier. He counted many recusants among his friends; Lord Strange loved him dearly.

The Squire decided that the news must be instantly communicated to Lady Strange, who would inform her husband. As he could not go himself, Simon must bear the message, for though only twelve years old, he was prudent and trustworthy. He called the two older boys from their studies: they were a great contrast to one another. Roger was small and pale, with marked aquiline

features, Simon the elder tall and broad for his years, his fair hair fell in thick elf locks about his face and strong sunburnt neck. Just now he wore an expression of precocious anxiety in his wide dark blue eyes, as he listened to his father's commands.

"Good sir, I'll go an' you bid me," said Simon falteringly. "Only—only—'tis such a very grand lady!"

"Aye, almost royal, for her own niece is Queen of Bohemia. I would I could go myself, but I dare not risk it with Lord Strange out of the country. 'Tis a good four miles beyond my limit and Master Hosiah Rowe, the parson at Brook Green, is mighty harsh."

"Perhaps I could make shift to go," said his wife.

"Nay love, thou art but just free of the ague fit. Simon will go—he is discreet enough to play a man's part."

The boy held up his head, proud of his father's trust.

"And what must I do, sir?"

"Ride in through the great gate and to all who would stay thee, answer that thou hast urgent business with the noble countess. I will give thee a letter asking her to speak with thee. Be not abashed when thou comest to speech with the lady. Make thy bow and bear thyself modestly."

"Aye, sir."

"And say that I have sent thee—but look you Simon, none must overhear the message. No, not even the chaplain nor any of the suite. The message is this: that I have heard privately that the Lord Strafford has been impeached and that the King after being long importuned has signed his death warrant."

"Will not my Lord Strange be aware of it, sir?"

"Nay, for he is on the Yorkshire border with the army. Say that my correspondent thinks it will go hard with my lord—but surely," he cried, interrupting himself,

"the King would never forsake him—he, who has ever dared all for the King."

"I will go clean my boots and brush my coat," said Simon.

"Why, Moll, has the boy no better suit?" asked the Squire anxiously.

She shook her head.

"You know at the last visitation the bailiffs took all our apparel," she said. "But perchance he could wear the new shirt I have made you, and your riding cloak."

"Well, no matter," replied Master Bradshaigh. "Remember, Simon, thou art a gentleman—apparel means nought."

"Yet my book says: 'clothes make the man'," put in Roger mischievously.

"Nay, nay, that is wrong—'manners maketh man', it should be," quoth the Squire, laughing. "Look not so glum, Simon lad—speak up straightforwardly—there's nought to fear and thou art like to do thy father's friend a service."

The boy nodded gravely: he was not one to waste words.

Young Simon bestowed more time upon his horse's toilet than his own. The chestnut colt was of the Squire's own breeding, and he considered it a great honor to be allowed to bestride it. Firefly shone like satin when he had finished grooming him, and meanwhile Tom, the yard boy, washed his four white feet.

Simon felt very important as he presently rode forth, his father's letter hidden in an inner pocket. He kept carefully to the grass edges of the roads for the ruts were deep in mire, and he wished to keep his horse free from dirt, that he might be properly admired at Knowsley. A burst of sunshine following the recent rain had brought out green leaves on sheltered bushes and the elm trees were crimson with close-set fringed

flowers. Simon tore a green twig from a honeysuckle in the hedge and stuck it in his hat as he pranced joyfully along. He expected nothing but pleasure from the ride, though the thought of the coming interview was alarming. His mother had known the great lady in her youth and had often told her children about the Masque at Knowsley which had taken place just before her marriage, and in which she had figured as one of the Three Graces. Charlotte de la Tremouille, a scion of one of the noblest of French Huguenot families, had then recently become Lady Strange—both were of princely rank and fortune, but while Lord Strange was simple and easy in his manner with every one, his wife had always been remarkable for the majesty of her deportment. She kept an almost regal state and mixed little with the country gentry though she was gracious enough on the sparse occasions when she and Mistress Bradshaigh met.

Simon was well known to all the countryside and the good folk he passed upon the road gave him a cheery greeting. He went by Lydiate, and was approaching the little hamlet of Melling, when two horsemen moved forward at the crossroads as though to bar his progress.

Simon reined up, but presently advanced at a walk. He had recognized the men—one was Master Rowe, a local parson of the puritan persuasion, the other a landowner, one Master Kenton—a highly respectable county magistrate. He wondered to see eight or nine stout fellows with bills in their hands drawn up behind the horses—perhaps there was a footpad about!

As he approached, the boy saluted respectfully enough, but to his surprise the minister made a sign with his hand and two of his followers sprang forward and caught Firefly by the bridle.

"What are you doing with this horse?" inquired Rowe.

"I'm doing no harm," returned Simon. "'Tis my

father, Squire Bradshaigh's colt, and I am upon an errand for him."

"You are right, neighbor," remarked the Magistrate. "And he is as bloody a papist as any in the country. Where art thou bound for?" he continued roughly, addressing the boy.

Simon nodded towards the distant line of woods.

"I'm for Knowsley. Will you bid your men not stay me, please."

He drummed his heel on Firefly's side and the four-year-old started convulsively, flinging up his fine head and curving his body in a manner that might have unseated a less practiced rider.

Kenton seized the boy by the collar, and one of the men, springing forward, grasped him by the knee and flung him from the saddle. There was a sound of rending cloth, the men shouted at the frightened, plunging colt and Simon stood up, still grasping the reins. He was covered with mud.

"How dare you treat me so?" he exclaimed, his blue eyes blazing with wrath. "You will spoil the colt too—'tis no way to use such a mettlesome youngster."

"Aye, what are *you* doing with such a horse?" repeated Rowe. "Know you not that a confirmed malignant such as your father hath no right to an animal of value above five pounds?"

A cold fear clutched Simon: he looked up at the Magistrate piteously.

"Why do you call my father such ill names?" he said. "Hath he not proved himself a kindly and peaceable neighbor? He is not malignant, no, nor bloody-minded neither as you called him just now."

After a moment's struggle for self-control, he added: "And now you have torn my coat which my mother had but just mended, and flung me in the dirt—nine of you against one lad."

"I had intended no violence," said Kenton in a kinder tone, "and I am sorry for the fall. As for the coat, 'tis old enough, and scarce worth mending."

"'Tis the only one I have though," cried Simon ruefully, as he tried to tuck in the remnant of his collar. "My Lady Strange will scarce think my appearance overseemly. Can I mount now, and go on? What more do you want of me?"

"The horse to which you have no right," responded the minister sternly. "Lead it away, men," he added impatiently.

Simon clung to the saddle in despair.

"Help! Help!" he cried. "Will no one help me? Why, Mr. Kenton, will you stand by and see me robbed before your face?"

"There is no help for it," said Kenton coldly. "Give the boy the saddle. There, sirrah, you must make your way home afoot."

One of the men unloosed the girth, the other jerked the horse away and laughed as Simon staggered back with the saddle which was suddenly left in his grasp. He let it slide to the ground and stood white-faced, speechless with grief and anger.

"We bred Firefly ourselves," he said in a strangled voice. "Why, he'll come across the mosses to my whistle! Are you satisfied now? You have broken my head and torn my garment and stolen my horse. May I now proceed to Knowsley?"

"You had best go home," said Kenton.

"I'll go if you force me, not else! I have to fulfill my father's orders," returned Bradshaigh resolutely.

"Let him pass then," said the Magistrate.

Simon lifted the saddle and balancing it on his head walked away as steadily as he could. He was stunned at the turn of events. What would his father say to Firefly's loss—Firefly, the pride of all their hearts, whom

they had managed to conceal each time the pursuivants had searched their premises?

Pausing at a cottage, he washed his face, straightened up his clothes as best he could and asked the compassionate goodwife to keep the saddle for him. It was ten times more embarrassing to present himself at Knowsley now, but Simon set his teeth and trudged on, feeling sore both in mind and body.

CHAPTER III

THE noble pile of Knowsley stood upon slightly rising ground, some few miles distant from the keep of Lathom. The great House of Stanley had absorbed lesser houses and now represented the ancient blood of Fitzalan, Lathom, Neville, Strange, Woodville, Hastings, Howard, Clifford, Cecil, de Vere and many another. The present Lord Strange was related to the Crown through various connections. He was directly descended from Lady Margaret Beaufort of sweet and holy memory, the mother of Henry VII who espoused the first Lord Derby. How she would have grieved had she known her family would fall away from the old faith she loved so well!

Simon had some difficulty in passing the gatekeeper. He came away from the encounter with blazing cheeks and marched up the long avenue, trying to rally his courage. The hall seemed to loom larger and larger at every step. Gentlemen of the household were visible in several directions, some flying a hawk, others playing at bowls in a green alley; no one however paid any attention to the young stranger.

At length he approached the mansion, and mounting

the steps with a rapidly beating heart, rang the bell at the great door. There was a baying of hounds, and two mastiffs came running from the yard to sniff and growl at him. Presently a lackey appeared, and looked most supercilious when the boy made his request.

"I am come from Squire Bradshaigh, and would fain have speech with her ladyship," he announced.

The man disdained a reply, and would have shut the door had not Simon set his stout country boot in the aperture and given a push with his shoulder, so strongly and unexpectedly that the door flew open again, and he marched breathlessly into the hall.

"How now, Sirrah! Go call the Groom of the Chambers," he ordered.

The footman hesitated, somewhat abashed at Simon's air of command, and in the pause a third person came upon the scene.

"What is the cause of this unseemly clamor?" inquired a girl's voice.

Simon snatched off his battered hat. The child who came towards him was tall for her age and so richly dressed that he judged her to be much older than himself, though in reality she was a few months younger.

"Madam," he cried eagerly—she smiled well pleased. "Madam, I have an urgent message for her ladyship which concerns my Lord Strange very nearly. I pray you get me speech with her at once."

"My lady is not to be troubled for such riff-raff as that," put in the lackey contemptuously.

"Have you a letter then?" inquired the girl, drawing nearer with a rustle of stiff silken skirts. She was dark, with features almost too strongly marked for childish beauty. Her neck and throat were bare according to the fashion of the day, and her black hair fell in long ringlets from a gold braid bound round her head.

"I have a letter"—began Simon —

She ran up, dignity forgotten: "Oh, come you from the army then? Is it from my lord?"

"No, mistress—but pray get me speech with my lady. I have been stopped upon my way here and my horse robbed from me, else had I been here two hours since. Pray give this letter to her ladyship and tell her that I am sent by Master Bradshaigh."

"Very well. Now you, Tom, show the young gentleman into the Green Parlor, and see you speak civil," remarked the girl severely, and she sailed away upstairs, her wide sleeves and ballooning skirts lending importance to her thin childish form.

Tom scowled as he looked after her.

"She gives herself as many airs as though she were countess already!" he exclaimed.

"Is it the Lady Mary?" queried Simon.

"Not at all. 'Tis but a lass of my Lord Cottington's that is half betrothed to our Master Charles. There's many a slip 'twixt cup and lip, and so I'd like to tell the hussy. She gives herself as many airs as though she was mistress of the house—and now she's like to get me into bad grace with my lady."

"I'll say nought, then," cried Simon good-naturedly. "Though you might have spoke a bit more civil."

He followed the man to a pleasant room, looking out upon terraces bright with daffodils, and Tom, in return for his promise of forbearance, pointed out the Stanley children at play in the garden. Lord Charles, who was about Simon's age though not so tall; my ladies Mary, Katherine and Amelia, Lord Edward, who was ten, and William the baby, a mere bundle of silks and laces upon the nurse's knee.

Simon felt himself to be very grown-up and important as he watched them, yet when he was presently summoned he wished mightily that he had not such manly service to do, and it was with shaking knees

that he followed one of her ladyship's women up the grand staircase with its marble statues and full-length portraits and through long galleries hung with tapestry to the Lady's apartment. He was conscious of every stain and mud-spot on his attire as he made his bow.

Lady Strange had not yet recovered from the birth of her ninth child. She was sitting at her embroidery frame and glanced up languidly as Simon came in. She was tall, of a full figure, and her eyes looked dark and somber in her heavy pale face, beneath their strong bushy eyebrows.

"Advance, young man," she said, and Simon thought her foreign intonation somewhat harsh.

"Madam, I fear 'tis no good news," he faltered. "And my father bade me speak it to you alone."

The lady flung out her hand imperiously.

"Go," she said impatiently to her attendant and added sharply to the lady who sat at work beside her, "Go, and send me Mr. Exton."

"And the youth, my lady? Will it please you he wait below?"

"Nay," exclaimed Lady Strange. "Leave the child here, he hath a message. Now," she added, as the door closed on the two women, "what hast thou to tell me?"

"My father has had private intelligence that—that my Lord Strafford hath been impeached—" began Simon.

"Our cousin Strafford!" she interrupted. "Impossible! Unbelievable! But I forget—the King is absent at York. There is nought to fear."

"But my father says his gracious Majesty consented to my Lord Strafford's trial——"

"Well, what then?" she cried in her fiery way, the color leaping into pale cheeks. "It is to be a triumphant vindication!"

"Nay, madam—they have condemned him——"

"God!" she exclaimed, starting up so violently that

the great embroidery frame on its castors went rattling across the polished floor. "But the King ——"

"The King has signed, my lady."

"Signed—signed what! Good heaven, you will drive me mad! What hath the King signed?"

"His warrant," said Simon, falling back in horror at her stricken look. "The King signed his death warrant and folk say there's no hope for him. Oh, my lady, could not my Lord Strange yet save him?"

She groaned, clasping her hands to her temples.

"Troubles thick on troubles! Oh, Strafford, can it be? Well is it written: Put not thy trust in princes! Mon Dieu, mon Dieu quel malheur! But it must be false——" she added, a gleam of hope returning. "Say it is false, boy!" And she made as though to shake Simon by the shoulder.

He stared up at her fascinated, but not to be frightened out of that frankness which his parents had enjoined.

"Nay, madam, my father said there could be no mistake; he has the news from a trusted correspondent. I should have been with you two hours ago, but that I was waylaid upon the road and my horse ——"

"Hush—prate not—I must think!" She pushed the boy away and sank back upon her couch, just as the arras was drawn aside and Master Exton, the chaplain, came into the room. Lady Strange beckoned him to her, at the same time striking on the handbell at her side.

The waiting-maid came running in with somewhat suspicious promptitude.

"The ink, horn and pounce-box quick! And a pen—Mr. Exton make me a pen I pray you! Why does the boy stand there?" she added impatiently. "Has he more ill-news?" And she gazed at the chaplain for answer.

Simon reddened. "I only waited to know if you had any message for my father," he said hastily.

He thought shame to insist on making known the loss of Firefly; but the influence of the Stanleys was paramount in the neighborhood, or had been up till now, and he knew that his father could ill-afford to do without the horse.

As I came to bring you my father's message, I was waylaid," he announced. "Will you send word to Master Kenton and Mr. Rowe, my lady, and bid them return our horse? They flung me off and took him by force and ——"

"Oh, take him hence, reverend sir, I cannot attend to him—I must write—I must send a messenger at once to my husband."

Simon bowed and left the room with a swelling heart. He did not wait for the clergyman but requested the maid who was waiting extremely close to the door, to be good enough to show him the way down.

So this was all one got for trying to oblige great neighbors—a heavy loss, a broken head, and harsh words to boot!

But even as he descended the stairs, hurried footsteps followed him and looking round he beheld Mr. Exton approaching in such haste that his Geneva gown flew out behind him.

"Why, my young sir, you must rest and take some refreshment before you go!" he cried, laying his hand on the boy's shoulder.

"That boy has been fighting!" interrupted a clear accusing voice.

Mistress Ann was coming up the stairs leading one of the young Stanleys by either hand. She stopped two steps below Simon, effectually barring his descent. "He's been fighting! Oh, fie! Do but see the big bump on the side of his face."

"I wasn't fighting!" declared Simon hotly. "Though I would have fought if I'd had a chance. Nine men set

on me," he went on with a flicker of boyish pride in spite of his despair: "Mr. Kenton, the justice was there and Mr. Rowe the preacher, and they took my father's colt—they took Firefly, who had not his match in the country."

The chaplain looked grave, and made a sign to the children to proceed, but Ann stood her ground.

"Why did they take the horse?" she asked. "For debt?"

"No indeed!" exclaimed Simon. "But just because we are Catholics. I had no permit to show and they said he was over five pounds value. Oh, what will my father say!" he added, wringing his hands.

Ann stared hard, first at Simon and then at the clergyman. "I don't understand," she cried. "Catholics are papists, aren't they? And papists are bad people!"

"They are not bad if they are true to their religion," cried Simon. "But let me pass, I pray you—I have ten miles to trudge home afoot."

The little girl stood aside, and as Bradshaigh ran down the stairs he heard her voice raised once more in brisk altercation with Mr. Exton.

"I think it's a shame then! Why should they take the boy's horse. I'll e'en to my lady——"

"Nay, nay, she must not be disturbed"—began the chaplain.

And then Simon heard mischievous laughter and the patter of running feet. As he plodded down the long avenue, a groom with a led horse came jingling up behind him.

"My Lady Strange hath bid me accompany you home, young master," he cried. "And as for my young Mistress Ann, she could scarce wait for me to bridle the nag."

Simon hopped joyfully into the saddle. The groom spoke with a good broad Lancashire tongue, and would be like to value good horseflesh. He had not a thought

to spare for little Ann Cottington's intervention into his affairs, but plunged into the history of Firefly's birth, pedigree, and capture, sure of having found a sympathetic listener at last.

The loss of the horse was little short of a calamity and perturbed Squire Bradshaigh greatly. He had little redress though the beast could have been sold for a great sum and he had counted upon being able to obtain this in any sudden emergency. He was nevertheless delighted with the manner in which his son had acquitted himself.

"I think ill to praise children to their faces, Molly," he observed to his wife. "But that is a rare lad of ours. Aye, I'm proud of our son."

The printed newsbook which arrived from London next day brought further heavy tidings. Lord Wharton, a bitter Puritan, had been appointed Lord Lieutenant of the county in the place of Lord Strange, and further edicts had been passed for the disarming of recusants. Catholics were to be dismissed from any posts they might hold in "ports or other strengths" and their employment given to protestants. The militia were to be "put in a posture of defense" in all such places.

On the head of this came a courier from James Strange, bearing letters for the Squire.

"Here is a business!" exclaimed Bradshaigh as he turned the pages. "My Lord Strange sends me a permit and would have me go to London upon Strafford's affair. He says he can trust no other to deliver these letters and he is himself riding to the King at York. If only the execution can be delayed!"

"But the money for the journey!" faltered his wife.

"Alas, poor Firefly! Well, dear heart, we must needs borrow it. I cannot fail of service to a friend. And I

will see Count Egmont, the Spanish ambassador, about Roger and Peter."

Mary's face paled. She clasped her little plump hands tightly. Young as they were, she believed her two boys had vocations to the priesthood. Their parents had decided to send them abroad to college at the earliest opportunity, but the mother's heart was pierced with anguish at the thought of approaching separation.

"God pity my weakness," she murmured. "We must not hold them back. And—and no priest's blood has been spilled in England for many years now."

"It is hard upon Simon that we cannot send him overseas too," said the Squire, "but it will be a heavy expense as 'tis and I can scarce do without his help here."

"You might take him with you to London," she suggested. "It will do the boy good to see the world a bit and polish his manners. And there will be little extra cost, for you can lie at my sister's while you are in town."

What was Simon's joy and excitement when his father broached the news to him. He, who had never seen a larger town than Much Crosby or Liverpool, the little seaport on the Mersey, was now to visit London!

CHAPTER IV

THE pasture fields were silvered over with daisies and clumps of primroses were ablaze on sunny banks as the Squire and his son rode by to London. The long hours in the saddle wearied Simon as much as a day's ploughing and he was ready enough for bed at the end of each

day's journey. Mr. Bradshaigh gleaned bad news at Chester and other towns through which they passed and had much to discuss with his sister-in-law and her husband.

Christopher Thorpe, the younger son of a Northumbrian landowner had early in life applied himself to trade. He was a good deal older than his wife, but still attended punctually to business, going daily to his office on the shipping wharves and to the Royal Exchange. The three daughters of the house were all married and Simon's first day in town promised to be dull.

The Thorpes' tall narrow house in Bloomsbury seemed very confined to the country boy, accustomed to be afoot at dawn. The Squire went out at an early hour to deliver Lord Strange's letters, and Simon tried to amuse himself by watching the street. The windows were all glazed and carefully closed to keep out the dust, and the folk who paced along outside were of sober mien and had pinched, melancholy faces. They greeted each other gravely, speaking without bowing or doffing their hats. Only once did he see two Court gallants meet each other and then there was such a ruffling of cloaks, swinging of rapiers and baring of long curls as each young man "showed a leg" and saluted with such an exaggeration of courtesy that the bluff Lancashire onlooker was filled with scorn.

In the early evening Mistress Thorpe beckoned her nephew mysteriously aside.

"You are discreet enough for your years, Simon," she said, "and you know that though no priests have been martyred for twelve years ago, there are several who languish in prison."

Simon riveted his eyes upon her, all attention, while good Mistress Winefride whispered that she was going to Newgate to visit Mr. Goodman, the Welsh priest.

"He was apprehended about five years since," she re-

lated, "but discharged on giving a bond for his appearance with which your uncle helped him."

"And has he ever since been at large, Aunt?" queried Simon.

"Nay, he was arrested a year ago but released by a warrant from Mr. Secretary Windebank. But he was taken again this year and condemned. The King sought to save him but the Lords and Commons, after a joint conference, specially demanded that His Majesty should put him to death and execute the laws against all other priests and Jesuits."

"And must he die then?" asked the boy.

"I do not know," she answered sorrowfully. "They have removed him from Tyburn to Newgate and cast him into the common side of the jail among all the evil-doers of the town, where he would perish of want if we did not relieve him."

Though Mistress Thorpe kept her own coach she deemed it imprudent to allow its blazoned panels to be seen in proximity to the prison. A hired coach was accordingly summoned: it shook monstrously and smelt of musty straw; but Simon found the drive exciting. Now he cried out in admiration at the wares so temptingly displayed on open stalls, now leaned forth to stare at a man on stilts, and now laughed at the attitudes of an impudent vagabond in the gutter.

But as they drew near Newgate a sense of gloom fell upon him and he grew silent. It had become very dark, Simon thought, but looking up presently he realized that it was the tall houses on either side of the narrow street which cut off the light. The neighborhood was squalid, the ill-paved road was heaped with filth and a noisome smell arose from the choked gutter. The coach stopped before the gloomy arch of Newgate and the barred door of the prison.

Mistress Thorpe was well known and was immedi-

ately admitted, to the indignation of the little crowd of slatternly women and raffish-looking men who were kept waiting. She asked if she might speak to her friend in the gatehouse and as the request was backed with a handsome gift of money, the turnkey agreed without difficulty.

Simon felt his courage ebbing as he followed his aunt through the doorway into a small close chamber. The jailer's wife came in carrying a baby and removed a ragged coat from the table, remarking as she did so that it had belonged to a cut purse who had been hanged that morning. Simon sickened to see her fling the garment over the arm on which she was dandling her child. But Mistress Winefride showed no repugnance to the woman, and chatted to her kindly; she left the room presently and a bent old man came in. Surely this could not be the priest, who was not yet fifty?

His aunt led him forward by the hand.

"Good sir, this is my nephew, Simon Bradshaigh from Lancashire. I pray you give us both your blessing."

"Right willingly," returned he, as they sank upon their knees. "Lancashire was ever loyal to the Church," he added kindly.

And then looking earnestly at the boy, he said:

"I think you will be called upon to bear sorrow for the love of Christ. There is a hard fight before you but stand firm, hold fast by the truths of holy Church and let no human affection or allegiance come between you and our Savior."

He put his hand on the boy's shoulder as he spoke, and Simon felt a thrill run through him as though he had received an accolade.

"But all my folk are Catholics," stammered the boy. "They only urge me the right way."

"Remember when you seem to stand alone that you always have the living voice of the Church to teach and

guide you," persisted the priest. Then he turned to Mistress Thorpe, speaking in quite a different tone. He begged her to send word to all the London priests to seek fresh places of concealment, for he had learned from felons recently thrust into his part of the prison that the laws against priests and Jesuits were to be pressed with the greatest vigor. It was among such wretched creatures that the pursuivants sought for informers.

"I have already warned Mr. Ward," murmured Winefride. "But you know his nature—he continues to teach and preach as boldly as ever in spite of his increasing infirmities."

"They have got all the names pat," he went on. "Walter Coleman and Father Lawrence the Benedictine, and poor fat Mr. Green and Mr. Roe—he, whom the Queen reprieved a few weeks ago—they are determined to bring all to the gallows."

"God save us!" she exclaimed, and then hearing the jailer's stealthy footsteps, she began to talk of the little basket of provisions, which Mr. Goodman presently carried away upon his arm.

Simon's heart was heavy with a nameless dread, and his aunt good-naturedly walked part of the way home that he might be diverted with the sights of the town. It was all very fine and the endless vistas of houses were a marvel to him, but he could not cast off his sadness.

But that evening Simon learned something which drove the thought of Newgate out of his head. Mr. Bradshaigh broke to his son that he intended to leave him behind in London, either with the Thorpes or in some great Catholic house, where he would have means of improving his education.

May Day ceremonies were still kept up in Lancashire, and Simon and his brothers and sisters had been wont to look forward to the holiday. As the change in the

calendar had not yet been made, it was indeed the beginning of summer, peonies were in red bud and lilies of the valley nearly over. There was plenty of wild blossom ablow, besides the iris and sweet gilliflowers in the cottage borders, bluebells in the coppices between the cornfields embalmed all the air, and yellow flags were coming out in the ditches.

But here in London there were no merry parties of bedizened children running from door to door. "Jack-in-the-Green" had been banished, and no one reared a Maypole within the city precincts. Though there were gardens and green pleasancess set among the houses, no maid would dare be seen washing her face in May dew. Such practices were condemned as savoring of heathen revelry, and Archbishop Laud, who had proclaimed the Declaration of Sports only thirteen years ago, was now languishing in the Tower. A still worse fate had befallen his friend, for Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, was to die that day.

Mr. Bradshaigh, coming in wearied, had brought the bad tidings. Up to the last all had hoped for a reprieve. Was he not the King's personal friend and had not his royal master sworn to him: "Upon the word of a King you shall not suffer in life, honor or fortune!"

Yet Strafford was to die.

The Queen, whose intercepted letters had encouraged Parliament to believe that she was forming plots for his rescue, had been frightened by a riot at Westminster. She begged the King to abandon his Minister to the fury of his enemies. Strafford himself, in a noble letter, gave the same advice.

"It is a sacrifice that will cost the King dear," said Bradshaigh sadly. "Aye, he is the last bulwark between the Crown and the Commons. It will be war, mark you, brother Thorpe."

Simon looked so eagerly questioning that his father gave him leave to speak.

"You said it would be war, sir. But surely Englishmen could not fight Englishmen? These puritan folk who are so strict for virtue—surely they could not draw swords against the King?"

The elders exchanged glances.

"You know, nephew, kings are but men, when all is said and done. They make mistakes and create enemies just like common folk. And then our nation has always dreaded the influence of a French Queen. And though her Majesty is a Catholic and mighty charitable to the poor, she has been a bad counselor to the King in this."

Simon lay awake that night for a long time. When his father came to bed and extinguished the rush light, he hazarded an observation.

"Father—I can scarce think the same of King Charles. To go back on his friend and all! To let Lord Strafford die, when you say he had little better than a mock trial."

"It is not for us to judge our sovereign, Simon. Keep all criticisms locked in thy heart. He is our anointed King and we owe him our best allegiance."

"Then you'll serve him still, Father, whatever happens?"

"Aye, lad, and fight for him, too, if we are but allowed weapons," replied the Squire unhesitatingly.

"So will I, too, then," said Simon, sinking back in bed, quite satisfied with his father's verdict.

Ten weeks later Simon was still in London, but no one would have recognized the sturdy Lancashire ploughboy in the young gentleman of the Duc de Gueldres' household.

Mr. Bradshaigh, though a plain man and far from a rich one, had good friends, and my Lord Strange was not one to let a service be forgotten. He would have

taken Simon into his own house had not his father preferred that of the Spanish ambassador. The Duc—more generally known by his title of Count Egmont, which he preferred to use in honor of his famous ancestor—was a noted Catholic. Mass was said daily at his house, which was the resort of every priest in London.

It was customary for every great house to take well-born youths as pages, but though it might tend to Simon's worldly advantage, the Squire would not have considered the plan for a moment had not the spiritual advantages loomed even larger. Besides the opportunities for hearing mass and going to the sacraments which Simon would have, it would be easy for Count Egmont to send him to Flanders with some of his own train, and there he could receive Confirmation.

When Mr. Bradshaigh unfolded the project to his son, the boy was filled with such consternation that he could not forbear speaking all his mind to his father.

"Oh, sir, do not send me alone among all these grand folks! And what is the use of it after all? You will need me on the farm, indeed you will—and 'tis to that I'll go back and spend my life."

"Learning never hurt any man," returned the Squire. "And with such an education you might make your fortune in a good match."

"That is not the fortune I pray for!" exclaimed Simon, made bold by his grief. "I only want to work for you and my mother. But I hope I have not vexed you, sir," he added. "Indeed, I would like well to be confirmed."

It was eventually arranged that young Bradshaigh should be an inmate of Count Egmont's house until opportunity could be found to send him to Flanders. In the meanwhile he was to earn such good opinion as would cause his brothers to be welcomed when they came to replace him. Count Egmont was always glad to oblige

a Catholic, and if at the same time he could show favor to the King's trusted friend, it was all to the good.

Simon saw his father depart with a stolid countenance which masked much inward misery. He found himself among foreigners, whose language he did not understand, among rich people, acutely conscious of his own poverty, among fashionable youth, feeling himself to be an uncouth rustic boy.

And then a hand touched his shoulder, a fat, pink hand, covered with rings, and Count Egmont said in his thick, throaty English:

"Come, my young friend, we are going to the chapel. You will not feel so strange there, for are we not all Catholics?"

On this comforting phrase, Simon resolved to take his stand, and one by one, the difficulties, bravely faced, vanished away.

It seemed strange to the country lad that every hour of the day should be as fully occupied in this rich house, full of servants, as in his father's home in far-away Lancashire. But so it was.

Mass was celebrated in an upper chamber at break of day. It was sometimes served by the Count himself, sometimes by his sons or Simon and one of the gentlemen. After mass there followed an hour's study, then breakfast, which consisted of bread and fruit, washed down with a draught of small ale. Next came two hours in the riding school or with the foils, then back to books until noon, when dinner was eaten in the great hall.

It is not to be denied that Simon found the good and plenteous table mighty pleasant. At home he was accustomed to help himself with anxious calculation lest there should not be enough left for the little ones. He had often gone hungry when there were unexpected guests, or when the poor clamored at the gate. But here he could eat all his tall frame craved for, and there still

would be plenty for all and plenty left to give away. How he wished that his brothers and sisters—dining frugally on buttermilk and oatmeal porridge—could taste the wonderful pies, decorated with a whole hunting-field in pastry—or sample the curious sweetmeats and delicious trifles in sugar!

Mr. Morgan, the chaplain, was often alone. He could not leave his chamber, or mingle familiarly with the other inmates for even in the Ambassador's house he went in peril, tolerated by the State as long as he was not in evidence. Simon would often rush up the stairs, three at a time, tap shyly at the door, and bestow his few moments of leisure upon the priest. He admired his patience in a life of constraint and confinement, particularly after Mr. Morgan had told him of his youth spent upon the wild Welsh hillsides. Simon had seen the mountains, like a dim blue vapor upon the skyline, when he went to visit his friends at Greenhalgh, and stood on rising ground facing the mouth of the Mersey and the Welsh coast.

Father Morgan had thrilling tales to tell of adventures among the crags, and narrow escapes from priest hunters in Larda. It was through his interventions that young Bradshaigh obtained leave to take his turn in carrying provisions to the imprisoned priests.

The country boy soon learned his way about London. At first he went with one of the gentlemen of the Count's train, but presently he was trusted to go alone. A foreigner was quickly marked and suspected, and a discreet lad, such as Simon, was safer by himself. The task was no sinecure, for there were twenty-six priests confined in the Clink, without counting Mr. Goodman and his colleagues, Mr. Reynolds and Mr. Roe at Newgate, and others at the Compter, the Marshalsea, the Gatehouse and all the other jails of the town. Simon grew familiar with the "common side" of Newgate, where

the greatest privations were endured. He knew which of the eleven little earthen, underground cells contained his friends, and which were inhabited by condemned felons.

The stench and filth were a continual trial; Mr. Goodman swept his cell daily with his own hands, but the clay floor was impregnated with the foulness of years, and little fresh air could penetrate to the low confined space. Mr. Ward, too, had been captured in spite of Aunt Thorpe's warning—good, old Mr. Ward, with his fiery eloquence and no less fiery face! He had been for years in the grip of a lingering disease and was continually in agonizing pain, and Simon marveled at his patience. The old man had been forty years in Holy Orders, and nothing could be alleged against him except that he was a priest. He went always in very poor, patched clothes, and the jailer railed at him in Bradshaigh's hearing.

"He has means enough, the old miser!" he cried, with an eye to his own perquisites. "Why does he go so ill-clad?"

The poor prisoners, thrust down into the depths of the earth to starve like rats in traps, could have told how William Ward's money was spent. His trial was fixed for July 21st.

"I knew some great good was coming to me," he said to Simon. "For I had but just begun a novena in preparation for the feast of my patron St. Anne. And mark you, the sessions begin at the Old Bailey but a few days before her feast."

Simon stared at him. Father Ward was a grave man as a rule, but now he was smiling; though flushed with pain, his face was lit up with joy. Bradshaigh glanced round the cell with its damp, sweating walls and uneven, mud floor. What a horrible fate to be confined

here and perhaps for years! The priest understood and smiled again.

"Ah, Simon! I thought as you did once! I have often heard of the joy of those who suffer for Christ's dear sake, but I imagined it to be a steeling of the will to patience. I had not tasted His sweetness nor His tenderness to the full—as I taste it now!"

His gaze passed from Simon's face to the wall, where a rude cross, formed of two sticks, had been pressed into the greasy surface. Simon watched, spellbound, for he knew that Mr. Ward was no longer conscious of his presence. The noisome dungeon seemed full of sweetness and joy, and sobbing out his unworthiness, the boy fell on his knees.

"Wake, Simon, wake!"

It was the morning of the feast of St. Anne, July 26th, 1641. Simon sat up, rubbing his heavy eyes. Monsieur Jules de Pecsteyn, one of the Count's gentlemen, was shaking him by the arm.

"Have you courage to see a martyrdom, young Sir? Holy Père Ward is to die to-day."

CHAPTER V

A HEAVY mist lay over the city, portending a hot day. It was still very early when Monsieur de Pecsteyn and Simon made their way to Newgate. Through the intervention of Mistress Thorpe, Mr. Ward had been moved into a better room on the previous day, and here he had been allowed the company of another priest, a fellow prisoner, for some hours.

There was a crowd of Catholic prisoners grouped in

the passage before Mr. Ward's door. When this was opened presently, Simon was amazed to see him calmly vesting for mass. A tiny altar had been prepared on the boards which had formed his bed, and Father Goodman was in the act of placing a small slate altarstone upon it.

The room was crowded, the prison authorities, well bribed, offered no interruption. It all seemed like a dream. Father Ward was saying mass, and yet in two hours' time he would be a glorious saint in heaven, looking upon his God, whom he now called down upon the altar. Mr. Ward, with his little tricks of speech, his perpetual toothache, his flushed face, was going to be a glorious martyr! It was strange, and yet, as he watched the familiar movements, listened to the familiar words, Simon knew that he had never been present at such a mass as this. Mr. Ward's body seemed but a shell, irradiated by his ardent soul. He pronounced every phrase with loving intention, and now, when he came to the consecration, with what love he gazed upon the sacred Host!

"This—is—my—Body——"

There was no bell to ring, as the priest fell upon his knees. All gazed up in silent adoration. God had shed His Blood for this man, who in humble return was about to shed his blood for Christ. Simon, who had not broken his fast, received Holy Communion, and prayed for strength that he might not falter in the dread hours to follow.

Simon felt exalted. His friend was going to a far more glorious combat than that to which Lord Strange had ridden away. Yet Lord Strange had been sad, in spite of waving banners and silver trumpets, while this man's countenance showed no fear at all, only joy. But even as he adjusted his new cap, there came a knock at the door.

"Are you ready there?" called a hoarse voice. "The sledge is come for you."

Father Ward himself called out cheerfully: "Yes, I am ready!"

It almost seemed as though he had been listening eagerly for the summons. Simon's exalted mood fell from him, the glory vanished from his thoughts. They were going to lay this poor, sick, old man upon a hurdle, drag him jolting in the dust and dirt among a yelling multitude, half hang him with a cord, chop him to pieces yet alive—his very soul sickened!

The two keepers had gone, with Mr. Ward in chains, following them as gladly "as though they had been two angels," as Mistress Thorpe remarked.

The Thorpes hurried away. Friends had invited them to wait in their house in Holborn which the procession must pass. Simon chose to go with Mr. Pecsteyn to Tyburn. The folk were already lining Holborn Hill, and he lingered among them. Some were Catholics he knew, and some were Protestants who came in sympathy to see the martyr pass. But the people for the most part were those of the baser sort, who came to enjoy the cruel spectacle as they would a cock fight or the baiting of a bull.

The time seemed long, and Simon shivered though the day was warm. At length the hurdle came in sight accompanied by a shouting throng. The holy old man had been laid on his back on the rude jolting vehicle. As he went slowly along, he glanced up at the windows of houses where his friends knelt praying, striving to make signs of benediction with his pinioned hands. Simon fought his way to the front, and walked beside the hurdle, weeping bitterly.

"Why do you weep, child?" said the victim, looking up, smiling.

"For you, sir," sobbed the boy.

"Weep not for my death," said Mr. Ward, raising his voice that all about might hear him. "Weep not for my death, for I can yet live if I please; but it is my joy to die for this cause, and therefore you have no reason to weep."

The crowd thickened as they approached Tyburn. An open space was guarded by soldiers, and there the Sheriff of Middlesex awaited in his coach. A scaffold had been erected, with a ladder propped against it. Near by stood a butcher's block and knives, and a huge fire, which blazed and crackled.

Mr. Ward seemed a little sick and giddy when raised from the sledge, but he was smiling and looked upon the preparations for his torture with great composure. Then turning to a bystander who besought his blessing, he said joyfully:

"I am infinitely happy to be able to lay down my life now, voluntarily, for God, for I could scarce hope to keep it one month longer in the course of nature."

Simon could not get near enough to hear all that passed. The Sheriff spoke to Mr. Ward, who seemed to be protesting his innocence of the crime imputed to him. Stray phrases reached him, when the worn old man raised his voice:

"I am—brought hither to die for being a Romish priest, but even this has not been proved against me. I *am* a priest, and have been so forty years, God be praised for it! I think myself infinitely happy—infinitely happy to die for my Lord and Master, Jesus Christ."

The Sheriff constantly interrupted the prisoner's discourse, and Simon, struggling to get nearer, presently perceived Monsieur de Pecsteyn on the further side of the fire. He made his way towards him, and after being pushed hither and thither in the crowd, at length managed to join him. He found himself much closer to Mr. Ward who was now kneeling in prayer.

Mr. Pecsteyn whispered that the Sheriff had demanded the martyr's real name, and he had replied that it was Webster, and that he had again professed his faith, and had declared that he would gladly lay down a thousand lives for the same cause.

Simon tried to pray, but his heart felt like a stone. Presently the Sheriff cried in a loud, impatient voice:

"Mr. Webster, have you anything else to say now?"

"Yes, Mr. Sheriff," returned the martyr promptly, "I have this to say more, that I pray heartily to God to bless the King and Queen, the royal issue, and State and all the people of this realm. And, Mr. Sheriff, I would bequeath some small tokens ere I die, amongst poor Catholics."

He began fumbling in his pockets with hands stiff and swollen from the recent pinioning.

The crowd surged forward, shouting out: "Give it to the hangman that he may favor you!"

Mr. Ward smiled as he answered, with a sort of innocent gaiety:

"Alas, alas! He favor me! See the fire and faggots, the halter and gallows—what favor can he do me? Nor do I desire to lose the merit of suffering in this cause."

He turned to the Sheriff then, giving him forty shillings, and begging him to distribute it amongst poor Catholics. To the hangman he presented two shillings and sixpence.

"Little enough," he observed, laughing, "for the good thou art to do me."

The man who drove the hurdle to the gallows was remembered too, and finally, Mr. Ward, looking about him, flung the remainder of his poor little possessions into the crowd—among other oddments an old inkhorn, and his handkerchief. This last, Simon thought had been intended for him, but Mr. Pecsteyn sprang forward and caught it in the air. Simon's attention was thus momen-

tarily distracted, when he looked again Mr. Ward was painfully mounting the ladder. A deadly sickness surged over him. Through a mist he saw the hangman adjust the halter; then all grew dark about him, yet before he lost consciousness he heard the old man's voice, quavering no more but firm and strong:

"Jesu! Jesu! Jesu! Receive my soul!"

When they returned to the Ambassador's mansion, it was to find the courtyard full of men and horses. Count Egmont had returned in haste from his useless journey, and still sat on his sweating horse, questioning the servants.

"Ah, Pecsteyn! Is it then too late?" he cried, as soon as he perceived Simon and his companion. "I have ridden half the night that I might be a witness to the holy martyr's death."

"He died with great constancy," said the other. "And here is his own handkerchief which he cast into the crowd."

The Count hastily dismounted and received the relic kneeling.

"There is no blood upon it," he said, after a pause. "Who will go to the place and dip this in the martyr's holy blood?"

As he spoke he pulled out his own fair embroidered kerchief.

The servants, Flemish and Spanish, looked doubtfully at each other. It was a dangerous and difficult task that their master suggested.

"I will go," said Simon suddenly. He stepped forward, seized the kerchief, thrust it into his bosom, and sped away before Count Egmont realized his intention.

It was not yet midday. Simon was fain to stop at a street stall presently and buy a roll of bread and a mug of inferior coffee. The food revived him, and he

went on again, choosing unfrequented ways and hurrying as much as he dared. It would not do to make himself conspicuous on such an errand as this, yet time pressed.

The sun shone, but with a veiled brightness, and ever and again came sullen mutterings of thunder.

The boy was so intent on his purpose that he felt no fear until he reached the very place of martyrdom. As he left the mean streets and mounted the rising ground, a sickening smell greeted him, and the overwhelming sense of horror of the morning swept back upon him. Mr. Ward was a glorious martyr, praised be God! But the thought of his constancy could not steel Simon's heart to face the shambles where he had been done to death. He turned on his heel. He would confess frankly that he had turned coward—it would be easier to bare the shame of the avowal than to stay another instant on this horror-haunted ground. The weight of misery fell upon him anew, yet even as he went downhill something within him reproached him.

"Will you also leave Me?" Christ had asked of His Apostles. How would Simon find courage to die if called upon to testify to his faith, if he had not courage to honor the relics of one who had so testified?

He stood still, inwardly invoking his angel guardian, and then resolutely wheeled round.

"St. Peter, my holy patron, make me brave!" he prayed half aloud. "By the look which Jesus cast on you at cockcrow in Pilate's hall, I beseech you, make me brave!"

There was a sudden noise of folk crying out in pain and fear, and a little group of men and women came running down the hill. One woman was crying and nursing her cheek. They were Catholics who had been driven from the place of execution by the soldiers and Sheriff's guards. Simon steadily retraced his steps until

he was near the gallows. The soldiers were grouped on the far side of the bonfire, laughing at the discomfiture of the poor folk whom they had routed with blows from the shafts of their halberds.

Simon searched diligently, his heart beating loudly in his ears. Mr. Ward had been stripped hanging, and the poor dishonored body had been dragged across to the fire. But in spite of blows and menaces the faithful had been here! Every drop of blood had been gathered up into the cloths to be cherished in secret; the very dust had been scraped up and carried away.

Simon forced himself to approach the block, taking care to keep a trail of smoke between himself and the guard. The holy martyr's head and limbs had been borne away. The block was dry, every stain having been already wiped off by the reverent touching of many cloths and kerchiefs. Every relic had been scratched up from the ground. Was it after all in vain? Must he go back empty-handed?

"Holy Mr. Ward, deign to remember me, send me a token!" begged Simon in his heart, and taking a piece of stick, he approached the fire which was beginning to die down and began to search among the embers. Almost immediately he found his reward—a fragment, which had slid down the end of a faggot and which, though parched and singed by the fiery coals, was not consumed. He started back in a momentary revulsion, and one of a group of idlers who had approached the spot attracted by brutal curiosity, suddenly perceived him.

"Hullo, you there!" he cried. "Look, look, there's a lad taking something from the fire!"

The halberdiers swung round. Simon stooped and, seizing the relic, wrapped it all glowing in the Count's handkerchief and thrust it under his coat. He was fleet of foot, and dodging through the smoke he darted across

the square, and leaped over the pale of the king's deer park which bounded it on the farther side. As he ran he felt decidedly triumphant: he had secured his prize and seemed to have distanced his pursuers. But the hue and cry once raised was not destined to be abandoned thus easily. Public executions, whether of recusants or malefactors, attracted the lowest dregs of the people. To these abandoned wretches it seemed fine fun to hunt down a papist, and there was always money to be made by it, too!

"A crown to the man who takes him," shouted the Sheriff's officer.

Soon a dozen or more rough fellows had scaled the paling and were hard upon Simon's trail, shouting: "Stop! Stop!" as they ran.

At home with his father or with the Greenhalgh boys, Simon had often beaten for a hare. He knew now what it was to be himself a quarry. This was worse—a thousand times worse—than facing capture by the soldiers.

Simon was determined to save the relic at all costs. He marked down a bramble bush ahead, all starred with white flowers, coarse grass growing up about it. There was a Scotch fir near by, with a broken branch hanging aslant. As he came near he drew the kerchief from his bosom, and, feigning to stumble, dexterously plunged the relic into the heart of the briar. It was all done with scarce a check in his pace, and glancing back, he saw that his act had been unnoticed. He made one last effort and dashed through the gate but even as he thought safety attained, two men sprang out of a doorway and seized him. The Sheriff's officers had kept to the road and came up before the mob reached the spot. Simon was instantly given into their custody.

He made no resistance, for it was obviously useless. He was hatless, and as he stood in the dust, clutched by rough, dirty hands, his feet planted sturdily apart,

his chest heaving with panting breaths, a great coach drew near, pushing its way slowly through the throng. Simon turned his head eagerly in the wild hope that it might be Count Egmont coming to his rescue; but no, the coat of arms emblazoned on the panel was strange to him. He faced the officer once more, trying to make out his questions, though the blood still sang in his ears so loudly that he could scarce hear. The pursuivants dragged him back that the coach might have room to pass, and Simon's eyes at first indifferent, suddenly brightened with recognition. From the shadowy interior of the vehicle a young girl leaned out. Spiral curls clustered on either side of her face which grew so white with dismay that it was easy to see she wore no rouge. Her sparkling, dark eyes widened.

"Oh, sir, look, sir!" she screamed, turning back to grasp the arm of the gentleman at her side. "That boy—'tis a young neighbor of my Lord Strange——"

The catchpools who held Simon paused to see if the great man with the long curls would acknowledge acquaintance with their prey. Simon recognized arrogant little Ann Cottington, whom he had met at Knowsley, but dared not make a sign to her.

The young lady disappeared abruptly, evidently plucked back by the paternal hand. My lord leaned forth in her stead, angrily bidding the footmen run ahead and clear the road so that the coach might proceed. The two flunkeys, who stood behind the carriage, leaped down and made haste to thrust the vulgar throng out of the way. The coach moved off, and Simon was left to face his enemies alone.

"What were you taking from the fire? Answer, you young villain!" demanded one of his captors.

"Be careful of your language, fellow," returned Simon, assuming a haughtiness quite out of keeping with his feelings. "No doubt you are aware that I belong

to the household of the great Count Egmont, Duke of Gueldres."

To name his patron as Spanish Ambassador was to declare himself a Catholic. He decided first to try the effect of the grand name.

"If you don't know the gentleman better than the last lord you tried to claim acquaintance with, it will avail you little!" said the other with a sneer. "Mayo," he added, "do you know this youth?"

"Mayo!" exclaimed Simon, as a furtive, shabby-looking man approached him. He shrank back, and then rallying his courage, cried stoutly:

"I am one of the Spanish Ambassador's gentlemen—arrest me at your peril! This man does not know me, but I know him by name. He is Mayhew, the renegade Catholic; he took Mr. Ward, the glorious martyr, who suffered to-day."

"Ha, you own yourself a papist! Are you a Jesuit, too?"

Simon burst out laughing.

"Why, I'm only thirteen!" he cried. "How could I be a Jesuit? I freely admit myself a Catholic, and that I went to the place of execution to gather up some drops of Mr. Ward's holy blood."

There was a cry of execration from the mob which pressed upon the group. Excitement had hitherto kept Simon going, but when he was presently marched along the street, his hands in fetters, a ragged, dirty thief-taker holding him on either side, he felt the horror of his situation to the full. Perhaps his arrest would bring fresh trouble upon his father; perhaps kind Uncle Thorpe would be ruined by it!

The Sheriff's officer rode in front, and a draggled crew followed behind, assailing poor Simon with language which made his cheeks burn, and occasionally pelting him with handfuls of mud. As they passed along

Lombard Street, Poultry, and the Cheap, people came out to stare and laugh; but at Holborn, Simon resolutely kept his eyes down—they would be watching him to see if he exchanged signs with any of the folk in noted Catholic houses. Simon was a brave boy, but he was afraid now, both for himself and others. The way seemed long indeed, but he comforted himself by thinking of that terrible journey of Our Lord with His Cross. It was only half a mile uphill from Jerusalem to Calvary, but the Savior's human body was so worn with torment and exhaustion, so crushed beneath the weight of the Cross, that He deigned to accept of human aid. Simon's namesake had carried the Cross behind Jesus! He bowed his head, inwardly repeating the holy Name.

The crowd was becoming troublesome, and the Sheriff's officer thought it best to take his captive direct to Newgate. Simon shuddered as the tall granite building loomed over him. There was something peculiarly horrible in the huge, rusty portcullis, which screeched as it rose slowly on its rollers, and fell back with a dull clang, seeming to cut off the warm outdoor world and to shut the young Catholic into a trap where none would pity or help him.

CHAPTER VI

IT GREW dark in the prison cell. Simon knelt down and said his usual night prayers. He did not feel at all heroic, on the contrary he was obsessed by the fear that he might be the means of bringing fresh trouble on his family. But he had honestly meant well, so there was nothing for it now but to commend his cause to God, and cast all his care upon his Savior.

The rude plank bed looked dirty and uninviting, but many another Catholic prisoner was obliged to use such pallets. He cast himself upon it, made the sign of the cross and murmured:

"Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit. Lord Jesus, receive my soul."

He closed his eyes but sleep would not come. He was lodged in one of the better rooms on the ground floor of the prison. Above were a row of terrible little cupboards, stifling, airless, dark holes under the leads. Father Ward had occupied one of these for three weeks before his execution.

The old building seemed full of noises—the scuffling and squeaking of rats, outbursts of drunken laughter and song, the dull repercussion of blows, shrill curses rang out at intervals. It seemed as though no one slept in the crowded dens and fever-stricken holes into which so many occupants were thrust. Simon distinguished the clash of fetters and the rattling breath of some poor soul in death agony in an adjacent cell.

He prayed, cold perspiration breaking out upon him; he longed with a sick sense of terror for home, for his father's kind strong hand, and protecting presence. His rosary had been taken from him but he tried to follow the mysteries counting the aves upon his fingers. At the fifth paternoster a sense of comfort stole over him.

"Our Father"—his drowsy eyes closed. Stray phrases drifted through his consciousness: "Underneath are the everlasting Arms. . . . Our Father . . ."

Simon fell fast asleep.

It was still early when the jailer drew the doorbolts on the following morning for the Ambassador's messengers had importuned the Secretary for State before he had had his morning chocolate. Simon still slept, undisturbed by the clash of bolt and bar.

"Poor child!" exclaimed the Count's gentleman as he gazed in.

The boy looked very young as he lay with his yellow locks tossed across his smirched face. It was not Mr. Pecsteyn who had come to deliver him, but Count Egmont's own secretary, very grandly dressed and with an escort of horsemen. The boy was quite bewildered when they roused him, and still seemed dazed while he washed his face and hands in the water which the turnkey made haste to bring him. He was anxious to get back his scanty store of money, but Count Jover made him a sign not to insist. He was a grave-looking Spanish gentleman of whom ordinarily Simon stood in much awe, but he was all kindness this morning. He bestowed a heavy purse for the benefit of poor Catholic prisoners, and dropped guineas into the expectant hands of all the turnkeys.

But as they emerged into the fresher air of the street where the coach and escort waited, he summoned up his courage.

"We shall be home in half an hour," said the Spaniard encouragingly.

"But there's something to be done first," said Simon. "I must go back to the park for—the Count's handkerchief."

"Nay indeed. He will not expect it—you have done enough already!" exclaimed Jover, marking the anxiety in the young face.

"But the holy relic is there. I am sure no one saw me drop it. And I am the only one that could find it again," persisted Simon. "If you will command the coach to set me down by the western side of the park, and if you will wait awhile—I can but try for it."

The Spaniard inclined his head, and gave the necessary order.

There is no denying that as Simon approached the

spot where he had been arrested on the previous day his heart beat at a most uncomfortable speed. They avoided the direct road through which he had been dragged a prisoner, but even so there was imminent danger of his being recognized.

"One of the men shall go with thee," suggested Jover, as the coach pulled up.

Simon shook his head.

"I can slip in best alone," he said, and walked away as quickly as his shaking knees allowed.

There was an unlocked gate for foot-passengers in the high park pale, and he went through it, and was soon lost to sight in the tall fern.

Folk stopped to look at the great coach drawn up in such a mean spot. Milkmaids on clinking pattens paused, laughing behind their curls as they suspected some clandestine meeting. Pot boys and apprentices lingered, too, thinking there must be a duel in the wind. The tall gentleman, with the long, black curls had his eyes turned anxiously towards the park, where deer could be seen stepping delicately through the green bracken, the sunlight flickering on their soft mottled coats. Presently an untidy-looking lad came quickly through the wicket, ran across the road and approached the coach. To the surprise of the onlookers, two lackeys leaped forward to open the door and lower the step. The black gentleman flung out his hands in eager welcome.

"Well?" he cried.

"All safe," said Simon, and laid his hand on his breast.

As the lumbering vehicle swung into motion, he turned towards Jover, and added breathlessly:

"It is passing strange! When I snatched it up, it was all glowing from the flames, and yet the kerchief is just as fresh and spotless as when his Lordship gave it to me. There is not a sign of scorching upon it."

They spoke little upon the homeward way.

Father Morgan told him later in the day that it was the martyr's very heart which he had plucked from the flames and saved at the risk of his own life—that heart of holy Mr. Ward, which had so glowed with God's love, and which now, as it lay before the tabernacle in the Chapel, gave out a sweet fragrance which perfumed all the room.

Count Egmont had warmly welcomed Simon on his return, but he was too wise a man to allow the boy to be overpraised. His exploit was not openly mentioned, even when the story of the relic was told, which was a great relief to Simon. He was a simple, diffident lad, and detested to be brought into prominence, and he would indeed have been amazed and confounded had he known how much his patron honored him behind his back. The story eventually reached the Queen's ears and she desired to see the young hero, though she agreed to the Ambassador's stipulation that he should only be brought as page in ordinary attendance on his master with other members of his suite. Simon was alarmed rather than gratified when told that he was to accompany Count Egmont to Court.

"I'll do something wrong, I doubt," he confided to his friend Mr. Pecsteyn.

"No, no," replied the Fleming kindly. "You need only stand by me, and do as I do. You will see the Princess," he added encouragingly.

But Simon was not interested in girls.

Nevertheless, as they entered the long gallery where the Queen was receiving her friends, it was a maiden who instantly claimed his attention. My Lord Cottington and his daughter were standing near the door. Ann was watching the new arrivals, and her eyes widened as they fell on Simon. She left her father without ceremony

and crossing over to the page, made him a graceful curtsy.

"But you should have bowed first," she cried accusingly as she straightened herself.

Simon was clutching his hat in one strong, nervous hand.

"Monsieur de Pecsteyn, this is Mistress Ann Cottington," he murmured.

Ann's black eyes sparkled—her face dimpled into laughter.

"Oh, la, sir, you should have said it the other way round!" she cried reprovingly.

It was tiresome acting the grown-up lady, and a second later she was pulling Simon childishly by the hand.

"Cannot we draw aside? I want to talk to you."

The boy was embarrassed, but Mr. Pecsteyn answered for him.

"You can go into the window recess here, for we shall have some time to wait, but remember you must speak low, and you must not sit, for the Queen is here, at the further end of the room."

Ann led the way, and promptly sat down upon the window seat.

"They cannot see me here," she announced.

"It is respect to the Queen you stand up for," returned Simon.

Ann changed the subject.

"Was it you in the street pulled about by those rough men?" she asked in a whisper. "I wanted my father to stop the coach but he would not."

"Yes, 'twas," returned Bradshaigh briefly.

"My Lord Cottington conveyed a message to the Count Egmont," pursued Ann in a stately tone. "Because I cried so much," she added, stealing a glance at Simon.

"But how did you know I was at the Embassy?" he asked.

"I didn't know, stupid!" she answered sharply. "But my father says 'tis the Spanish Ambassador's duty to see after papists. What had you been doing? You seem always in some kind of trouble."

"I was set upon by the mob," said Simon.

"You are always set upon every time I see you," returned Ann, tossing her head. "Who was it to-day?"

"To-day I was set upon by a lady," cried Simon with a broad smile. "Aye, and a bonny one," he added, meditatively appraising the silvery figure before him.

The girl was affronted and flushed hotly, springing up so swiftly that her gown of cloth of silver shimmered like moonlit water. Her hair was frizzed out on either side of her face, and elaborately bound behind with silver ribbons. Her full sleeves were broadly slashed with crimson silk and she wore slender broad-toed shoes of silver with crimson roses.

"Bonny!" she repeated indignantly. "Why, you speak like a peasant or a beggarly Scotsman! And why are you always set upon, pray? Cannot you defend yourself? You are tall enough—but perhaps you are afraid?" she added, as Bradshaigh seemed determined not to answer her taunts.

He looked at her darkly—what boy could be proof against such an accusation?

"You do not wear a sword, I observe," pursued Ann.

"I know how to use one though!" exclaimed he, stung in his tenderest point. "But I am a Catholic and cannot bear arms."

"There's going to be a war," observed the girl. "Will you not fight for the King then?"

"Of course—we all will. If he will allow us anything to fight with. But farewell, mistress. The Count is making me a sign—I must attend him."

He remembered to bow before he turned away, and Ann followed him, rather than be left alone. The Am-

bassador knew her father and greeted the pretty, spoilt child playfully.

"So pretty mistress, you are in town! I had thought you had been at Knowsley or Lathom with your young lord and husband."

"He's not my husband yet," observed Ann. "I don't like Lord Charles—he is an ugly boy. Why was Master Bradshaigh in the hands of constables the other day, my lord Duke? He will not tell me. Perhaps he stole something?"

She flashed her mischievous glance at Simon again, but he feigned to take no notice.

The Ambassador's fat, smiling, good humored face suddenly stiffened.

"Take care what you say, little lady. Master Simon here is too old for childish insults, and too brave. Come, sir, we will make our bows to the Queen."

His hand touched the boy's shoulder graciously. Simon blushed, but a sense of comfort stole upon him. He could not defend himself against this girl's attack without brag and boast, but his patron had vindicated him nobly and his heart felt light as he walked after him through the flaming silks and satins of the assembly.

Ann pouted, taken aback for a moment. Then she turned eagerly to Mr. Pecsteyn.

"*You* tell me about it," she said coaxingly. "I will never repeat it to anyone."

So Mr. Pecsteyn told her, adding, however, the rider that she had best plague the boy no further upon the subject.

Ann nodded, tears springing into her eyes.

"I am sorry I spoke so hasty. Indeed, I will twit him no more. He must be sad to have seen his own friend die—and die a traitor!"

"Nay, Father Ward died a glorious martyr for Christ."

"One side must have been wrong then," observed Ann. "Was it the State?"

Mr. Pecsteyn thought it wiser to leave the question unanswered and to restore the young lady to her father.

The Queen smiled graciously as Count Egmont approached her and made some remark in French which Simon did not understand. She was still beautiful, with her black-fringed gray eyes, and haughty mouth, but Simon was more interested in Prince Charles, a tall, ugly boy of twelve, and delicate drooping Princess Elizabeth, who were playing at draughts, sitting at a lacquered Chinese table behind their mother.

Simon had little to say about the royal family when he returned to the Embassy. His mind was preoccupied with the little lady who had cried at seeing him a prisoner, but he kept his thoughts to himself.

CHAPTER VII

THE Spanish Embassy had remained a fortress of Catholicity, troubled but impregnable as yet. In Henry the Eighth's days it afforded the only means by which the persecuted Queen might communicate with the Holy See. Through the Elizabethan era, when the dark night of faithlessness brooded upon the land and worldly glamour could ill hide the treachery and bitterness which stalked abroad, in James' time when the life of an innocent recusant was valued at a crown, the Spanish Embassy still openly maintained a priest.

It was here that Simon became acquainted with the full liturgy of the Church: hitherto mass had been the only act of public worship in which he had taken part—if that can be called public which was celebrated in fear,

with sentries posted, and where prayers and preaching were delivered in hushed voices. It was new to him to see the Holy Sacrifice offered up on an alabaster altar blazing with lights and decorated with flowers, by three priests wearing the gorgeous vestments of Spanish embroidery, all agleam with gold and set thick with jewels. God's praises were chanted fearlessly by a full choir, and one might enter into the presence of the Blessed Sacrament hardily, without any cautious backward glances or unlocking of secret doors.

Yet Protestants of the King's party who chiefly visited the Embassy spoke almost in the same terms as Catholics. Religion was the ruling interest of the day, and though a dangerous subject when there was such acute divergence of opinion, it was freely discussed.

Since the Commons had flung Laud into the Tower his adherents had diminished. Clergymen who held by him and the prayer book were already being deprived of their benefices and Presbyterians untrained in all save preaching had been thrust into their places. Many of the great families supported this faction, attending three sermons daily with all their family and servants. Their lives were very strict, conducted something on the lines of the sect of Pharisees; they were inclined to be censorious of their neighbors belonging to other communions and considered Catholics as quite outside the pale of Christian charity. The simplest pleasures were by them considered sinful, they dared not nod to a friend for fear of being accused of making an idolatrous *congé*. Two women innocently strolling through the fields after attending Divine Worship were clapped into the stocks for the crime of "profane walking", yet anyone who bowed the head when pronouncing the holy Name of Jesus laid himself open to the charge of idolatry. The followers of Laud, though narrow-minded and violent towards dissenters, cultivated the personal love of Our

Lord. The prayer book was as usual the basis of the struggle and the efforts which Laud had made to impose it and its precepts upon the clergy had done even more to embitter the controversy than his order that the communion table should be moved back from the aisle to the chancel. It had long been considered merely as a table on which hats and cloaks were flung during the service. The change was considered a stealthy move towards Rome, though as a matter of fact Laud was even keener to hunt out priests than dissenters. He wished to believe that he with his handful of followers were the representatives of the true *Ecclesia Anglicana*, holding the faith handed down from the Fathers, and purged of its accumulation of Catholic superstition. It was the feverish nationalism which had prepared the downfall of English Faith in the days of Henry and Elizabeth, and now, as then, it was linked up with the supremacy of the Crown. The Catholics of England had always supported the Throne and now they were to be called upon to sacrifice the remains of their shattered fortunes without regaining their national status, still vilified alike by Churchman and Covenanter.

The Queen had been seriously alarmed by the popular outcry against her prior to Strafford's execution. Her mother, who had lived for some years in England was advised to leave the country, and Henrietta Maria in her panic was eager to return with her to France. The Commons, getting wind of her intention, sent her a deputation in which they strongly deprecated such a proceeding. The Queen Mother therefore returned alone, and the English Consort, rallying her courage, resolved that come what might, she would remain at her post. Her friends visited constantly at the Embassy, and such as were Catholics came to mass there, for a few days after the King's return from his fruitless journey to

the North, the Queen's five confessors were sent to the Tower.

One day, shortly before Christmas, Vespers were in progress. Simon's thoughts were with his family and he was praying that he might receive some token or letter from them for the Feast. Towards the end of the service there was a little stir by the door, close to which Simon was kneeling. He got up to make room for the newcomer, and to his surprise and joy beheld Master Nicholas Nevile, the son of old Squire Richard of Greenhalgh—one of his father's best friends. He smiled broadly—it seemed an instant answer to prayer. No doubt Master Nevile would have a letter in his pouch and would bring good tidings of all at home. He seemed sad and weary however and had no answering smile. Sinking upon his knees he buried his face in his hands. Simon could not help being somewhat distracted during the remaining prayers, and he was impatiently waiting outside the door when Master Nevile at length emerged. He was always so kind that Simon burst out directly instead of waiting decorously for the elder man to speak first.

"Welcome, welcome Master Nevile. Is my father come to town? How does my mother? Oh, sir, it is good to see you!"

Nicholas laid his hand on the boy's shoulder. He was true Lancashire and not one to beat about the bush.

"I bring bad news, my lad," he said directly. "Thy father is very ill and I am come to bring thee home."

Simon turned white.

"Not dead?" he whispered.

"Nay, not dead, please God, but like to die, so there is no time to lose. 'Tis a sudden fever which struck him, and I have rid fast for he desires to see thee. Go, make ready your saddlebags while I speak with the Count. I

will tell you all I know upon the road—though there's little to tell."

"Is the priest there?" whispered Simon.

"Aye." Master Nevile presently added with a tightening of his grasp: "And sitha, Simon, thou must be a man now."

The boy nodded silently. He seemed to be living in a nightmare as he went first to beg Mr. Morgan's prayers, and then to inform the tutor. He changed into his old riding-suit and thrust his linen into the worn leather-bags which he had brought, so scantily plenished, to London. His fine new clothes he laid away in the drawers, for something told him the easy pleasant existence at the Spanish Embassy was over forever.

Count Egmont sent for him presently and the Countess wept as they bid him farewell. Simon's eyes were dry but there was an immense weight upon his heart as he stammered out his thanks for all their kindness shyly and awkwardly.

The journey was a hard one for only three nights were passed on the way. The first in a hostelry, the second in the house of a loyal Catholic family, the yeomen Penderels near Worcester, the third in Cheshire with kinsfolk of Master Nevile.

Good Master Penderel had ridden with them for a mile or two to show them a bridle path which shortened the way.

"Farewell, sirs," he had cried at parting. "And remember if you be passing this way again, there's always a welcome for any Catholic with any o' our name. Six brothers we are and all honest, remember."

"I'll remember," answered Simon, little thinking how the promise was to be redeemed in after years.

Simon's heart was heavy as he rode and he was very

tired, as his hired horse stumbled through the beloved mossy gateway of home.

Aunt Katty ran out to greet him.

"God help you, my poor lad," she cried, weeping. "Your father has taken a worse turn, and we have sent for the priest in haste."

The little ones were weeping but Simon was dry-eyed as he stood at his father's bedside holding his inert hand. A sudden, immense responsibility seemed to have fallen upon him, and he must not shirk it. He must show his father that he was a man and that his mother could be safely trusted to his care.

He tried to speak but no words would come.

"My poor lad," gasped the dying man. "Be guided by thy mother."

A shiver ran through him and Simon burst into agonized tears.

"I'll remember all you have ever told me, sir. I'll stand by my mother and the little ones. Oh, father, father!"

Bradshaigh made a vast effort to speak clearly.

"Save your grief, child, listen! They will take you from her."

But he could say no more.

The priest, hastily summoned, came just as he was in gown and slippers, but the Squire was already unconscious when he entered the room. The window stood wide open to a flaming sunset, Mistress Mary knelt by the bed supporting the flickering blest candle in the inert hand of the dying man. Simon knelt behind her falteringly reading out the prayers for the dying. Grandmother, aunts and servants all were there upon their knees. Even as he crossed the room the monk raised his hand and pronounced the words of the Absolution. Mr. Bradshaigh had received the Last Sacraments at

the beginning of his illness: it seemed as though he were only waiting for this—the God—speed of the Church—for his spirit passed as Simon breathed Amen.

From time immemorial the Bradshaighs had been buried in their own vault in the parish church, but Master Rowe, the present incumbent refused to allow Roger Bradshaigh to be laid with his ancestors. He was a follower of the newest religion, one who anathematized the prayer book, reviled bishops and found even the Presbyterian fold too broad for "pure religion". Master Rowe preached justification by Faith alone, and though he heartily disliked all other sects he reserved a peculiarly virulent hatred for Catholics.

So Squire Bradshaigh was secretly laid to rest by night, in the hidden graveyard in the woodland at Greenhalgh, which Richard Nevile had prepared in defiance of the law, and had had consecrated by a hunted priest. The place was walled round and there was a tall stone cross in the center.

My Lord Strange was on his way home from York, and could not pay his last respects to his friend, but his lady wrote kindly to the widow and offered her the loan of the great mourning-bed and black chamber hangings which the Stanley widows used in their bereavement. My Lord wrote too, and announced a formal visit for the following week. Madam Bradshaigh burst into tears as she perused the missive and summoned Richard Nevile in haste. It was decided that Master Nicholas should journey to London at once, carrying with him Mary Bradshaigh's two younger lads in order to confide them to the care of Count Egmont, who would in his turn convey them to college abroad.

"But why is there such haste, mother?" queried Simon, who did not divine the menace hanging over him. "No

one can part me from you anyhow. Surely no one can part *me* from you, dear mother?"

His question was answered only by his mother's tears.

CHAPTER VIII

TO "OBSTINATE RECUSANTS" such as the Bradshaighs and their friends, the death of the head of the family brought acute anxiety in its train. The natural anguish of separation was capped by an even darker menace.

Squire Bradshaigh had fought the good fight and finished his course—who could doubt that he had gone to receive his reward? But he left sons who were minors, and his widow knew that they would be torn from her arms and handed over to protestant guardianship. She had seen other cases of little ones whose birthright of faith had thus been stolen away.

Master Richard Nevile was of opinion that the younger boys might be smuggled out of the country, if Simon, the heir were rendered up. He spoke of the matter to the boy when he found him kneeling by his father's grave on the morrow of Lord Strange's visit.

"You have something to tell me, have you not?" he said, and drew the boy down beside him on the low wall which ran round the enclosure.

Simon looked down, plucking at the soft moss between the stones with impatient fingers.

"The President of the Council has assigned the Lord Strange to be my guardian," he said at last in a muffled voice, "and he is come to take me away with him."

Master Richard breathed a sigh of relief.

"Thank God," he said. "It might have been a great deal worse. My lord is an honorable man and your

father's friend. I feared they might place you in the hands of Colonel Moore."

"Colonel Moore!" exclaimed the boy. "Why, sir, isn't he a great puritan, and one that wants to pull down all the English bishops and have nought but preachers?"

"He is that same—a dark and dangerous man, bitterly opposed to the King's party and even more bitter against us poor Catholics. Come, lad, your father hoped that if you had to quit home, my lord might take you into his own household."

"Was it for that you hurried Roger and Peter away?" asked Simon.

"Yea. You are old enough to stand firm for your religion, but it would have been more difficult for the younger ones, and once in protestant hands—or removed to the Isle of Man—what would have become of their vocations to the priesthood?"

He glanced at the boy's downcast face. "I think, Simon, if thou hadst been offered the choice, thou wouldst have chosen freely the heaviest burden?"

Simon set his teeth, strangling the sob that rose in his throat. He nodded.

"Well then, the Lord will give thee strength to bear it. Look ye, Simon, your mother will not be troubled by the contentious folk about, as long as she is under the protection of the House of Stanley. I think no one will dare accuse her of sending your brothers abroad, nor exact the fines."

"But there'll be no one in the house but ladies—I should be there to take care of my mother," cried the boy.

"You will be more of a protection to her in my lord's household than if you were at home, for when the master of a Catholic house dies, the folk round about descend upon the heritage like a flock of vultures—a

piece here and a piece there filched away till there's nothing left for the children."

"Then must I go? Oh, Master Nevile, I thought you would surely find some way out! Must my poor mother lose us all four at a blow?"

"Poor souls, 'tis hard on you both," said Nevile compassionately. "As for the farm, we'll do our best that she come to no loss. And you, Simon, must never forget that you are a Catholic. Remember any faults that you show will be imputed to your religion. Strive to be humble and serviceable"—he broke off, adding after a pause. "'Tis a man's part thou hast to play, and God knows thou art but a child still."

"My father trusted me," said Simon hoarsely.

"And he'll help thee still. God bless you, keep you and guide you," he added, as Simon slipped to the ground and knelt for his blessing.

Nevile stood smiling till the boy had passed out of the enclosure, and had stridden away among the trees. Then he went back to the cross, and, kneeling there, prayed for a long time.

The family of my Lord Strange had removed from Knowsley to Lathom House. This was a fortified mansion much the older of the two—the ancient stronghold of the House of Stanley.

Simon felt an additional gloom fall upon him as he followed his patron through the tall, grim, entrance-gates. Lord Strange had ridden ahead in grave converse with his steward; Simon followed a length or two behind as custom demanded. But now the steward fell back, and my lord, turning in the saddle, beckoned very kindly. Simon moved forward until he drew level.

"I know you feel sadly, my dear boy, and I would not have it otherwise. You have lost a good father and I a loyal friend. But you must learn to look upon me

as one who takes your father's place, and loves you well already for his sake." As he spoke he leaned down, his heavy curls falling forward on his breast as he gazed earnestly at his young ward.

Simon gazed back at the kind dark face, with its low brow and deep-set hazel eyes. He knew that he should have expressed thanks, but he could only look doggedly upward in silence.

Strange understood however. He smiled, and his smile was singularly sweet.

It was kind, friendly little Lady Mary who undertook to introduce Simon to his future tutor, the chaplain.

When young Bradshaigh followed her into the room where Master Exton sat alone in a black Geneva gown and bands, reading a great tome, a chill fell upon him.

The divine did not look up or change his attitude, till Lady Mary went to him and twitched him by the sleeve.

"Here is the young gentleman of whom my father told you, Master Exton," she cried unabashed. "He is to learn with Charles, you know."

The clergyman closed his book.

"I trust, young man, that you are of good religious conversation and life?" he said solemnly.

"I trust so too," said Simon bluntly. "But 'tis not yours, Sir. I am a Catholic."

Master Exton had had his orders and did not take up the gauntlet. He looked somewhat sourly at his new charge and remarked that he would examine him "upon his book" on the following morning.

Time dragged with Simon. Charles played scant attention to him though the girls and younger children were very friendly. The protracted supper was an ordeal. Afterwards, the family were summoned to prayers.

Simon withdrew in some trepidation and made his way to his own room.

It was an octagonal chamber in one of the eighteen towers with which the house was fortified. He had not paused to take a light, but the moon shed a blue shaft through the narrow lancet window. Outside owls were calling to each other from the trees far below. The sky was full of little wisps of cloud and stars like dots of light. Over there, in the velvety darkness beyond the woods lay home, and mother. How far away it seemed!

There was no one here to whom he could apply for counsel, he must judge and decide for himself.

It was difficult not to be distracted as he knelt on the cold floor saying his night prayers.

"I spoke out a bit too quick to the chaplain," he reminded himself, at the examination of conscience. "'Twas not over-courteous. Please God, I'll do better to-morrow!"

The usual princely state was not being kept up at Lathom. Lord Strange had thought it best that the neighbors' sons who were being educated under his hospitable roof should return to their homes. The whole household dined together in the banqueting hall, the family at a table raised on a dais, the clerk-marshall, gentlemen ushers, the steward, grooms and servants a step lower.

Simon was accommodated with a seat below the Stanley children but above the chaplains—her ladyship using a nice discrimination in the matter of precedence.

Lord Strange was an indulgent father and allowed his children great latitude. Lady Ann Cottington made as free as they did and addressed her elders boldly without waiting for them to speak first. Her place was set next that of Charles, but she made no effort to conceal her preference for Simon, stretching her slender neck

to gaze at him above the row of little curly heads which intervened.

"The boy is not eating any dinner," she exclaimed loudly, on the Friday after Simon's arrival. "He refused of the pie and now he is not taking beef neither!"

Lady Strange turned anxiously towards the footman, who stood behind the chairs of her own youngsters. William was, of course, in the nursery, but Ned was munching away steadily.

"'Tis Master Simon, I mean," declared tactless Ann.

"Are you ill, my boy?" inquired Lord Strange kindly.

"No, my lord," muttered Simon. "I—I am eating all I need."

He had taken a piece of bread and there would be cheese presently. There was a suet pudding so he could not help himself to that.

Lord Strange looked perturbed.

"Why Simon, your appetite is good enough as a rule," he cried. "What's wrong? Come hither to me."

"Your lordship has no need to trouble yourself," interposed Exton. "'Tis but Romish superstition."

Simon got up, blushing hotly and miserably conscious that every one was staring at him.

"I pray you excuse me, my lord," he said, approaching Strange's great, carved chair.

Lady Strange intervened, drawing her thick, dark brows together.

"How is this, Sirrah? We will have no caprices here. John, serve him to meat! Now, sir, obedience is the first virtue of a child—go sit and eat."

Simon looked doubtfully at his guardian.

"Go!" repeated the lady with a little tap of the foot.

"But his lordship knows I cannot eat meat o' Fridays," said Simon brusquely.

"Then go to your room, sir. I'll have no disobedient churl at my table," she responded quickly.

"I have no thought of disobedience, madam," returned young Bradshaigh firmly. "But doubtless your ladyship is unaware that Catholics——"

"That will do—to your room!" interrupted Strange, hastily.

Simon obeyed with alacrity this time. He felt somewhat puzzled but none the less a little elated. He was hungry but felt that it was rather fine and manly to give up his dinner for his faith. Half an hour's reflection in the bitter cold dissipated his comfort. Lord Strange had seemed to think him rude and contumacious, her ladyship had been vexed, Mr. Exton triumphant. He had not produced the good effect that one would expect in suffering for religion.

He wandered disconsolately about the room shivering in the draught from the ill-fitting window, until presently there came a pattering of footsteps outside and a whispering at the keyhole.

"Master Simon, Master Simon!"

He opened the door. Lady Ann stood there, her little face all marked with tears. She grasped in one hand a large piece of cake, the other held up her skirt which was full of nuts and apples.

"I'm sorry," she said, hanging her head. "I had no thought to get you into disgrace. I put my dessert in my lap for you."

Simon had gazed at her stonily at first, but his ill-humor soon melted.

"It was meddlesome of you to call attention to me," he remarked. "But I suppose you knew no better."

And he took a large bite of the cake.

Halfway through the slice a scruple smote him.

"Maybe I oughtn't to eat it," he said. "I think they meant me to go without."

"It's scarcely worth while stopping now," argued the little girl.

Simon gazed at the fragment which remained.

"Perhaps not," he agreed. "But do you have the nuts and apples, Ann, and I'll make this last as long as I can."

"You are to go to my lord in his book-closet at two of the clock," observed Ann. "Charles was bid come to tell you but he'll forget, very likely. I do not care greatly for Charles."

"Why not?" asked Simon.

"Oh, I can hardly say. He is always discontented and never knows what he wants to do. My father would say he suffers from ennui and I think that is foolish for a boy. I know what *I* want to do—ride my pony and run with my dog, and—but hark! They are calling you."

Simon brushed the crumbs from his tunic and went hastily down the winding stone stair. Mr. Exton was at the foot calling out that his lordship awaited him. The boy went on down another stair and across a landing. He felt troubled and defenceless—God grant that his slow tongue might be able to utter the right words. Before he pushed open the door, he made the sign of the Cross.

Lord Strange was dressed for riding: his plumed hat lay beside him on the table, he was writing in a thick manuscript book and did not look round as the boy came in. Simon stood respectfully silent until he laid down his pen.

"Come hither," he said then in a gentle tone. "We must have an explanation, Simon. Have you aught to say?"

"Only this," confessed the boy. "One of the children brought me a piece of cake and I ate it, though I should not have, for I know full well you meant me to go without."

Lord Strange could not help smiling. He was relieved

for this was doubtless to prove but a childish matter after all.

"That was not your true fault however," he rejoined after a pause. "But to disobey my lady and flout my authority—that was bad indeed, Simon."

"But what was I to do?" queried the boy, gazing full at him.

"A child's first virtue is obedience to those in authority over him, and you are yet a child, Simon. Your duty was not to question but to obey."

Simon drooped his head and answered very low.

"And so I do obey—God and my father."

His naturally ruddy face had paled, his hands were nervously clenched.

"My dear boy, your father is with God, and I stand in his place," said Strange hastily.

"Only for worldly things," urged Simon. "Oh, my lord," he added with sudden emotion, "do not ask me to go against my conscience and my father's trust, for indeed I cannot do it."

Lord Strange, as so often in his brief career, was torn by conflicting desires. It was against his nature to coerce anyone, particularly a child. And yet this matter must be decided, and Lady Strange's wishes respected.

"You are too young to understand," he said. "And therefore you must be guided by me. There is no harm in eating flesh on Fridays. There is no word in the Gospels to forbid it."

"There are plenty of laws that are not in the Gospels though," demurred Bradshaigh. "'Tis only natural. Our Lord sent the Apostles to teach all nations—He never said 'twould do to write down the Gospels in a book."

"Why Simon, surely your father never taught you to disbelieve in the sacred Scriptures?" exclaimed his lordship, deeply scandalized.

"No, sir, but he held, as all Catholics do, that we

have to depend on tradition and the teaching of the Church as well."

"But I think Simon, that I am more fit to judge of the teaching of the Church than you," said the elder man, still speaking temperately and kindly. "I believe all that you believe—that Christ my Lord and King is present in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar—in the Sacraments—in sanctifying grace—the only difference is that I belong to the national branch of the universal Church."

"Yes, my lord. You have a fair altar here in the chapel, but in Master Rowe's church, seven miles away, there is but a table in the aisle where men throw down their greasy caps and mud-stained coats while they listen to the preaching. Master Rowe is a minister of the national church, yet he does not think as you do."

"Alas, there are unworthy shepherds! Yet remember the Iscariot was among the Apostles.—Rowe leans to the puritan interest."

"But my lord, if 'tis a national church, why hath the nation cast the Archbishop of Canterbury into the Tower?"

"There is much division of thought in these unhappy times," cried Strange hastily.

"Then my lord, it is surely best to cling to the tree and leave the branch alone—if it is a branch. For there is no division of thought in the Catholic Church and Christ has promised to be with her always and has given her a living voice which cannot err or lie. My father would sooner have seen me dead than break a law of the Church."

Lord Strange sighed.

"I am patient with you, Simon, because it is but natural you should cling to the precepts of a most beloved father. But though sincere he was mistaken, and now he knows that he was misled and would wish you to be guided by me."

"I'm sincere too," said Simon bluntly. "And if I yielded, my lord, it would be to please you and I should be a coward and a sinner, acting in defiance of my conscience, so I cannot do it."

"I know not what to say to you," Strange replied. "Come, we will kneel together and pray for guidance. God knows I only wish for your eternal good."

"I'm sorry to vex you. I love you well," murmured the boy.

They knelt by the great oak table, side by side, praying silently. At length Lord Strange rose to his feet.

"It would not be right for me to urge you against your conviction," he said with a heavy sigh. "We will make a compact—we will daily pray for each other."

"Thank you, my lord—you are very good to me. I'll pray for you with all my heart."

"And are you very hungry, my poor boy?"

"Oh, my lord, I care naught for that. I can go without dinner o' Fridays well enough, if only you and my lady will not be vexed at it."

"Fasting meats are not good for children," answered Lord Strange doubtfully. "But I would not have you go unfed."

"We often have potatoes at home—or porridge," said Simon. "But perhaps I had best stay away from the table, my lord. The children will ask questions and it vexes Master Exton, too. Give me leave not to appear in the hall on Fridays and have no care for the rest."

"It will be best so," agreed his lordship, with an air of relief. He felt a trifle conscience-stricken as he made his report to his noble partner.

"I have forbidden the youth to present himself at table on Fridays, my dear love," he said. "Until such time as he conforms entirely to our wishes."

The words were true certainly but he was uncomfortably aware of the dishonesty of the statement. He,

Lord Strange, had entered into a tacit compact with Simon Bradshaigh not to press him against his conscience. It seemed just to do so, but it was a thing which Charlotte de la Tremouille could not possibly understand and it was perhaps the only secret her husband ever kept from her.

CHAPTER IX

SIMON BRADSHAIGH was frank by nature and it irked him to have recourse to subterfuge—but what was to be done? Though Lord Strange made no resort to force in order to induce his young ward to take part in Protestant worship, he exerted a constant kindly pressure to that end. The children would come and drag him by the hand at the hours when the family went in decorous procession to the domestic chapel, or Mr. Exton would urge the claims of gratitude, or worst of all, Lord Strange would look at him with reproach in his kind eyes.

Simon loved him and would fain have pleased him in all things. He was thoughtful for his years, and was fully aware that if his father's friend had not assumed his guardianship it might have been assigned to Master Rowe or some such fanatic who confounded religion with tyranny. He suspected with truth that the difficulties which were flung in his way whenever he asked leave to visit his mother, were devised to wean him from her influence and that of the Church in which he had been nurtured, but he was sufficiently philosophical to accept the fact that it was done in good faith.

He ceased to importune his guardian, but quite calmly took the law into his own hands. The horse his patron

had given him 'was kept rough and inhabited a shed at the end of the home paddock. Simon soon learned to get out of the house when only scullions were astir, leap the damp ditch which had of old been a moat and find his way to the sweet-smelling, warm darkness where Dapple was immured. A bridle was all the equipment he needed, but it was necessary to go afoot and lead the steed for the first mile until the skies brightened. There were breaches in the demesne wall which suited his purpose, and Dapple soon grew familiar with the way.

Poor Mistress Bradshaigh lay awake vainly many a bitter winter morn, in her somber chamber made yet more dark by the sinister black draperies—the morning furniture which the Stranges had lent with kindly intent. What widow could fail to feel her desolation impressed more strongly upon her, waking as she did in a four-post bed, narrowly resembling a hearse, with its crêpe-laden black curtains and nodding sable plumes? The cheerful faded tapestry with designs of long-necked birds and beasts and strangely simpering lions was hidden away under pall-like draperies of unrelieved black—the window curtains, the very coverlet were of the same inky hue. It was a distinct comfort to old Mistress Bradshaigh that her son should be mourned with such decorum, but gentle Mary sighed often as she lay wakeful, smothered in black, weeping for her husband, longing for her three absent sons, and straining her ears for the sound of horse's hoofs in the courtyard. Yet it was at her behest that Simon came but once a week, and she dreaded lest even this breaking of bounds should get him into trouble.

No one made any remark upon Simon's early morning activities, and the days passed in the usual routine.

An air of gloom hung about Lathom. The King's affairs were going from bad to worse; it became obvious

that civil war was imminent, and in the face of danger Charles thought it wise to veer back to the friend whom he had previously slighted. He sent Lord Strange a royal warrant to raise troops in Newcastle where money was to be supplied for their equipment.

Lady Strange was pleased that her husband should receive proper recognition but James himself was filled with foreboding. He was a man of peace, passionately attached to his home and children, and ill-formed to struggle with the intrigues and enmities rife at the Stuart Court.

Few people knew how deeply this pride of race influenced this melancholy sensitive man. He had written down among his prayers and religious meditations, that honor was to be cherished above all other attributes and any offence against a man's honor must be resented even to bloodshed. His chivalrous and romantic nature exalted the idea of honor to an exaggerated degree, Christian meekness being interpreted merely as kindness and due condescension to inferiors in the social scale. James, like his royal relative, had been nourished in the belief that noble blood carried with it inalienable prerogatives not only on earth but in heaven also. God had appointed him, James, to a noble sphere. He was lord of half Lancashire and King of Man with the right to appoint the island bishop. He deserved the confidence of his sovereign and the awed respect of his social inferiors unless he forfeited a proportion of that respect by leading a vicious life. He firmly believed that even the sinful of blue blood were entitled to a special reverence on account of the fluid in their veins, to which the most pious-living squire could never aspire. He loved his wife—not only on account of her great qualities but also for her splendid lineage, and though content to live a hard, rough life when a soldier in the field, he never lost sight of the dignity due to his rank.

He thought it his duty to explain some part of those sentiments to Simon, as he paced up and down the firelit hall after supper with his hand upon the boy's shoulder.

The young Squire was, truth to tell, a little nettled that his guardian should deem it necessary to speak of his condescension in the matter, and of the inestimable privilege his young ward enjoyed in being treated exactly as one of the Stanley children.

"But you know, my lord, though I'm sensible of your kindness, I'd a deal sooner be at home with my mother," he said frankly.

"That cannot be," returned the other with great finality. "My reason for speaking to you thus plainly is that you may realize your position from the onset. I feel sure I can trust your father's son to deal honestly with me and never betray my confidence."

"Deal honestly! Me!" exclaimed Simon, turning scarlet.

"You mistake my meaning," said Strange. "You are but a boy now, but in a year or two you will be a young man. The fact that you have been bred up familiarly with my daughters and their friends must not be allowed to puff you up or cause you to nourish ambitions of marrying above your station."

"Oh, my lord, I can easily promise you that!" exclaimed Simon, much relieved. The idea that he might covet marriage with any of the little sandy-headed Stanleys seemed to him infinitely humorous. "When the time comes, I suppose my mother will make a Catholic match for me," he added carelessly.

Lord Strange bit his lip.

"You will be very dutiful to her ladyship while I am away," he said a little sternly. "And Simon—it grieves me mightily that you take no part in daily prayer. I have often urged you gently hereto, and I would that I could think you would pleasure me in this."

"I cannot," said Simon. Then he added on a sudden impulse: "And since you are leaving, my lord, I would fain tell you something more. I go to see my mother every week. I think it was perhaps on religious grounds that you sought to separate us, but my mother is a good, good woman and suffers sorely from her loneliness."

"And have you hidden this from me all these weeks?" asked Strange, trying with an obvious effort to speak severely.

Simon nodded.

"You did not question me," he said. "And I think my first duty after God, is to my mother. Our grief is still green," he added, looking down.

Lord Strange hesitated. He sympathized whole-heartedly with the love of parent and child, it was not in his nature to be harsh, yet he was aware that he was contravening his wife's express wishes. This boy's soul had been placed in his care, she said, that it might be saved from idolatry and superstition. As he meditated, pulling at his short beard in perplexity, he had a sudden inconsequent recollection of the feeling of chubby arms about his neck. Little Jamie had been wont to hug him so—little James whose fragile dust had lain these five years in the grand, cold marble tomb in Ormskirk church.

He turned away with a little groan.

"I only bid you obey my lady, Simon," he said in an altered voice. "I lay no express commands."

That night as he sat late in his book chamber, Lord Strange took down the great bible and cut in it, as was sometimes his wont. And these were the words he found beneath his finger and at which he sat gazing a long, long time.

"The world will hate you, but have confidence, I have overcome the world."

Doubtless yonder at the Court bitterness awaited him, perhaps even humiliation. The King scarce knew his own friends and was easily led into suspicion of them. All great men have enemies and Lord Strange never doubted that he himself was one of the great. Yet the Savior said: Have confidence. Might he take this as intimating his final justification in the world's eyes? Not so had the Redeemer conquered, His victory had been in the death of the Cross.

A cold shiver ran through him as he closed the book.

Lathom House had none of the charm of Knowsley, which stood in the midst of ten miles of parkland and was said to command more diverse and pleasing prospects than any other seat in the country.

Knowsley was the palace of a great nobleman while Lathom was a grim fortress. Of old it had possessed eighteen towers, but these had been reduced during the comparatively peaceful years which succeeded the Wars of the Roses, some of the remainder were ruinous and the outer defences had fallen into decay.

Lord Strange was cast in a philosophic mould, but his wife—had she been a man—would have been a man of action. On the very morning after her husband's departure, Charlotte set about the renovation of the ancient fortifications.

Master Nevile and other county worthies of proved "honesty" were sent for to advise and assist.

Young Charles found military preparations infinitely tiresome. Simon on the contrary threw himself into the work heart and soul. Lathom House hummed like a hive of bees, all the gentlemen of the county—at least all those who wore love-locks and plumed hats—came riding in daily with reports of the men who could be mustered, the munitions which must be supplied. The moat

was deepened, and the sluices cleared and repaired: it could be filled with water now at a moment's notice.

Ordnance or small cannon were purchased, six to each tower, three to fire on one side, three on the other. The Eagle Tower as the high turret erected upon the central keep had been called from time immemorial, was not provided with any piece of artillery, but cases of musket bullets were carried up and placed in readiness there.

Lady Strange also began to make stealthy purchases of wheat. Her husband's burning desire for peace had brought upon him the suspicion and distrust of both parties, each equally determined to force their difference to a final issue and each complacently claiming the monopoly of the Almighty's approval.

Lady Strange's vigorous measures were at least infinitely more pleasing to the royalists. She was an exceedingly capable woman, and by keeping the direction of affairs in her own hands evaded or over-ruled those petty quarrels and struggles for precedence among the smaller gentry which would otherwise have occasioned so much delay and difficulty.

Simon, who wrote a good hand, was entrusted to copy lists of arms and provisions. Master Nevile frequented the house and often claimed him as assistant. To his arrangement was due the provision of a pure and copious water supply, and he was also Lady Strange's best adviser as to necessary stores of food.

Simon was young and inexperienced enough to deem War—even civil war—a fine and glorious thing. He longed for the King's standard to be raised in Lancashire—a course Lord Strange ceaselessly advocated—and that restrictions of creed might be removed that all alike might take arms and flock to the defence of the crown.

It was delightful to act as messenger, dashing about

the country on a spirited horse, and though Lady Strange would not allow studies to be completely set aside, there was a good deal of liberty accorded to the boys, which Simon enjoyed to the full. Lady Mary and her sisters were likewise full of importance, for they were called upon to assist her ladyship and the housekeeper in linen-closet and still-room.

But the King still delayed. The royal standard was not raised in Lancashire and enthusiasm and expectation died away. High hopes and noble projects degenerated into the old undignified wrangling between the Crown and Parliament. The King attempted to enter Hull but the Governor, Sir John Hotham closed the gates of the town against him and handed over the Magazine—or store of arms and ammunition—to Parliament which caused it to be removed to the Tower. The trained bands of London adhered to the Parliamentary cause; two strong puritans, the Earls of Warwick and Essex were appointed to command the Fleet and the Army, and the two Houses solemnly vowed to support them till death.

While Parliament levied forced loans, the King's friends rushed to his assistance, eager to lend him money and to equip men for his defence. The Queen repaired to Holland in February, under pretence of escorting Princess Mary to her husband, the Prince of Orange, but in reality to endeavor to obtain help and support from foreign Princes.

Lord Strange, convinced as he was that success for the King's cause depended on the rousing of the North, urged once more that the standard should be raised in Lancashire. Should his request be granted he pledged himself to muster three thousand men. He steeled himself not to notice the slights and coldness of those who surrounded the King and pressed his point humbly but firmly in the Council chamber. Lancashire, he declared, was a convenient center for all the Northern counties and of easy access from North Wales—the people both gentry

and commons for the most part leaned to the King's cause, they were strong, hardy, loyal to their chiefs and should make good soldiers. He himself would promise three thousand foot and five hundred horse to be furnished at his own charge. He had no doubt that in a few days Lancashire alone could furnish an Army of ten thousand men. The Cabinet was by no means unanimous in agreeing to Lord Strange's generous offer, but eventually the King empowered him to raise the Royal standard at Warrington in Lancashire and to call a general muster of gentry at Cokey Moor near Bury and on Fulwood Moor near Ormskirk. Each of these places contained a large contingent of tenants and followers of the House of Stanley and Lord Strange prepared to place himself at their head with the well-tryed pledge of his family to remain with them "tide life, tide death."

Scarcely had Strange departed upon his mission than insidious suggestions were poured into Charles's ears. The Court circle was a hot-bed of petty intrigue and Strange had incurred the enmity of every clique by his determination to belong to none, and by his retirement to his own estates. Envious councillors now pointed out to the King how unlikely it was that one so arrogant, who had withdrawn himself from all personal touch with the King for so many years should now make such magnanimous offers with no thought of personal gain. They played upon the King's active jealousy of anything touching his prerogative. Was not James Strange nearly allied to the throne, they whispered—a man of wide territorial possessions and with a great following? Had he not kept open house during all these years, so that his lavish hospitality had become a by-word? And now he was prepared to raise forty thousand pounds and equip an army! Was this not a man to be feared rather than thanked? If a popular leader of the Protestant cause was to be found, one who had not em-

broiled himself with the Houses of Parliament, nor yet taken up the cause of the impeached bishops—if in fact a new claimant for the crown were put forward, it would be an easy step from King of Man, to King of England.

Charles repelled these suggestions and yet half believed them. His mind harbored suspicions to which he dared not give open voice. He could not, he conceived, afford to refuse Lord Strange's help, but he could, and did, make it plain that he reposed little trust in his cousin.

Strange had not been best pleased by his cold reception, but as he returned homeward his spirits rose. He had gained his way, which was an infinite satisfaction to him, though it was likely to prove a severe strain even upon his resources. He had arranged with Lord Cottington that his daughter's visit to Lathom would be indefinitely prolonged. Mistress Ann was her father's sole child and heir, and Cottington was ever in close attendance on the King when he was not absent on diplomatic missions. The King had given his consent to the match, and Lady Strange was eager that it should take place immediately but her husband considered Ann too young. Nevertheless her presence at Lathom would have a good effect upon the surrounding gentry, and the prospect of her large dowry might render the contemplated raising of the large sums of money more easy. He was pleased too that he would be able to spend some weeks at home without dereliction of duty, for James Strange was never happier than in his own nursery with his babes upon his knee.

Notices were sent out to Lord Strange's special friends, and while the gentlemen discussed the news in the great hall and planned three musters—one on Ormskirk Moor, one on Preston Moor and the third at Burscough—the children talked of it as eagerly in their own secret meeting-place in the great attic.

"Our tenants are to form a part of each gathering," observed Mary, her voice somewhat obscured by a large bite of apple, for the secret meeting-place was kept supplied with suitable provisions.

"I shall ride the black and wear my silver sword," said Charles in a tone of great satisfaction.

"I shouldn't if I were you," cried Ann. "You can't manage the horse, Charles, and he'll bolt with you as like as not."

"Hold your tongue, Miss, that's no way to speak to your future husband," returned Charles hotly.

"It would be as well to mount the bay on the field," suggested Simon pacifically. "The black is a thought too hot, but you could ride him on the march, and take the bay as your second horse."

"When I desire your opinion, Master Bradshaigh, I shall ask for it!" cried Charles truculently.

"Of course, my father will decide," interposed Mary. "And Simon, you shall have my gray mare, for she's handsomer than Dapple. Now Ann," she added, "take an apple or a pear and do not be forever sowing discord between the lads."

Charles was seated on an empty barrel, drumming his heels on the sides.

"Your generosity is thrown away!" he cried in malicious triumph. "Simon is not going."

"Not going?" repeated Simon blankly.

"Unless you abjure your papistical principles, that is," returned Charles.

"Nonsense," said Simon. "Why all the Catholic gentry are going—the Neviles and the Irelands and Mr. Heywood and George Rawsthorn—but perhaps I am to follow Master Nevile?"

"Nay—I heard my father say that you were to remain here—so now then!"

Simon was silent, stunned by this news.

"Then perhaps my father fears this house may be assaulted and leaves you here to defend us," cried Mary quickly. "That would be a most honorable post, Simon."

"But the Ormskirk muster is so close, there could be no sudden danger," said Bradshaigh. "If what Lord Charles says is true, 'tis a matter of religion, but I do not think my lord is one to cast off his Catholic neighbors when they come to offer service to the King."

"There's to be a service here in the Chapel before the gentlemen take horse," announced Ann. "Couldn't you go for once, Simon? 'Tis but to ask a blessing on our arms and you wish for that just as much as we do."

"Well," cried Simon in a bantering tone, "the early Christians were thrown to the lions, because they would not throw a grain of incense into a brasier. That was not much to do but they preferred the lions."

"But the incense was a sacrifice to idols," shouted Charles. "*We* are not idolaters."

"Nay, but you are members of a false religion and I cannot pray with you. King Charles has put to death our holy priests and though I'll fight for him if need be, I'll not pray with him nor you neither. So now let us try who will be first up the Eagle Tower."

He darted from the room, the other children following in noisy pursuit.

Simon made a formal request after dinner to be allowed to follow his patron to the muster at Preston Moor. Lord Strange was surprised at the meekness with which the boy accepted his refusal. There was no mention of religion, his lordship merely remarking, "I prefer that you should not come."

Charles was rather disappointed that his comrade was not present at the departure of the gallant band. The troops were better disciplined than on the previous occasion, and marched past in close order very creditably.

"Where is Simon?" whispered Mary to Ann.

"I do not know but I guess," replied her friend, clasping her hand.

The girls exchanged glances.

Simon, asking no man's leave, had ridden forth alone, mounted on his rough cob and armed with the little rapier which had been given him by Count Egmont, and his father's old pistol, which he had dug out stiff and rusty from its hiding place in the haymow at home. Mistress Bradshaigh knew and approved his project. If it were a risk should the Parliamentarians obtain control of the country, it was a risk which his father would have wished him to take.

So Simon Bradshaigh of Moor Grange rode in alone and duly signed the muster roll on Ormskirk field.

CHAPTER X

A FEW months later, on September 16th, the House of Commons impeached Lord Strange and proclaimed him a traitor. This act could hardly be considered unexpected, towards such a vigorous partisan, and sensitive to public opinion though he was, Strange would not have been disturbed by it, had there been any corresponding movement of sympathy from his own side. But Charles made no sign, the Court party held aloof, and the Lancashire gentry became more discontented. If their leader was to be treated thus after his tremendous sacrifices there was small likelihood of the lesser fry obtaining that consideration which they knew to be their due. Lord Strange was not even offered the command of the battalions he had raised, and when he re-

paired to Newcastle for the arms and money which the King had promised should await him there, it was to find the magazine empty, and no funds forthcoming for the pay of his men. He was obliged to return in haste to Lathom to raise more money for the immediate needs of his troops, Lady Charlotte generously contributing the whole quota which her brother the Duc de la Tremouille had sent for her relief.

At the end of September, Lord Derby died. He had long been in very bad health, but James was a loving son and the blow was a heavy one to him. The remains of the late Earl were brought from Chester to the family vault at Ormskirk, the great hatchment was set up upon the Eagle Tower, and the funeral furniture was fetched back from Moor Grange.

Charles, for his part, was delighted to succeed to the title of eldest son and was careful to remind the servants that he was now Lord Strange.

The King seemed destined to affront his friends and play into the hands of his enemies. While the Lancastrian loyalists felt their enthusiasm checked by the cold reception of their proffer of service and the rebuff to their chief, their opponents made capital of the King's attitude and attracted into their ranks many of the Northern landowners whose patriotism was not unmingled with ambition and a strong desire of self-preservation. Between the two parties the Catholics were flung to the wall. Both sides looked upon recusants as a ready means of filling their empty war chests. Lord Derby had been ordered to forward his own supply for the use of the King's troops, understanding that they should be replaced, but by an intrigue of the Court party the arms and money which he had duly handed over were never restored.

Parliamentarians next began to accuse the King of a leaning towards papists. The most violent broad sheets

were issued and persecution of Catholics was greedily demanded. Charles, more anxious to discredit these rumors than to hearken to the plea of justice, had signed the death warrants of two holy priests, who had been martyred at Tyburn early in the year. Now his first act on his return to York was an equally bloody one. In the noisome vaults of the Castle two priests were confined. One was young, Mr. Catherick, the other Mr. Roe, was eighty-seven years old. To placate the Yorkshire Protestants the King ordered their execution though no man could say anything but good of them. Mr. Roe had passed a long life in doing good to others, he was arrested when tending his little garden, and dragged to York with great cruelty, flung across the back of a horse, as he was unable to sit up owing to his age and infirmity. The martyr's head was fixed on Bootham Bar, close to the King's palace: his Majesty could not glance from his eastern windows without perceiving it. It was a strange answer to Catholic Lancashire's rally to the sovereign's need. Yet scarcely a man of the old faith abandoned the cause to which they were so coldly welcomed. "Fear God and honor the King," wrote the Apostle: they obeyed with perfect simplicity.

The promise to raise the royal standard in Lancashire was broken. The fact that it was set up in Nottingham on August 22nd, only a few weeks after the noble Lancashire musters of men and arms, seemed a direct slap in the face to the King's northern adherents.

These things were hotly discussed by the cavaliers who came and went at Lathom Hall. Hostilities began in earnest with the battle of Edgehill. Then came the news that the King was marching on London, later that he had been repulsed at Turnham Green and had gone into winter quarters at Oxford.

In February, 1643, the Queen returned with all the supplies and men which she had gathered abroad, and

landed at Burlinghame in Yorkshire. Mistress Ann was sent for by her father and went gleefully off to York in expectation of an appointment as lady of the Bed-chamber. But the primroses were scarcely ablow in the wind-swept garden before she was back again with thrilling tales to tell, and new clothes, and a manner of braiding her hair which made her appear almost a grown-up lady. She had acquired more than one little affectation, and mingled French words in her talk in a way which drew forth the scorn of Simon and Mary.

The Duke of Newcastle had hurried to meet the Queen and the troops under his command—many of them Lancastrian—were henceforth known as the “Queen’s Army.”

“*Ma mie* Stanley!” Ann cried in faithful imitation of her sovereign. “It was the most dastardly thing you can imagine. That wretch Butten, who commands the Parliament ships ——”

“Parliament ships!” interrupted Amelia. “They used all to be the King’s ships.”

“And of course so they are really. The Parliament has no right to ’em,” chimed in Mary. “But go on, Ann —— What happened?”

The children were crouching under the battlement of the Eagle Tower, partly to avoid the sharp spring wind, partly that they might not be sighted from below. They were anxious to hear Ann’s news.

“Well,” cried the girl importantly. “They have spies out, all through the country. And they found out where the Queen was lodging and actually dared to bombard the house.”

“What! When the Queen was there?” exclaimed Simon.

“Yes indeed! I woke up in such a fright at the crash of the first cannon. The Duke would have the Queen away, just as she was, in night clothes with bare feet. She

looked splendid with all her dark hair about her, and she laughed at the shot and ran back to find her little dog."

"Oh, Ann—what did you do?"

"Why, my woman was crying, you know! And they were afraid of fire and the noise of the shot and the falling bricks was dreadful. But the worst was poor, little Marie Porter. She went quite frantic with alarm. You knew her Mary, didn't you?"

Mary nodded, staring fascinated at her friend, whose lively, excited manner suddenly fell from her.

"Oh, it was so sad," she whispered. "I could not calm her. We got her to York, holding her between us in a coach, but she went from convulsion to convulsion until she died in her mother's arms."

Ann began to sob and Amelia flung her arms about her. Mary got up and hung over the battlement.

"Well, Mistress Ann, you're the first of us all to face fire and I take off my hat to you," said Simon.

"It wasn't a bit what I expected," confessed Ann. "The maids made such a noise and I was alarmed for Marie. There was such confusion in the dark."

"I'll wager you did not scream," said Simon.

Ann raised her tear-stained face, and considered him seriously. Then she called to the other girls.

"Oh, la, my dears, I am getting frozen here. Come down to my chamber, and I'll show you my lilac taffety. 'Tis in the sweetest suit-bag you ever saw—'twas the Duchess who sent it me—you'll see how curiously it is wrought."

She led the way briskly down the steep stair, and Amelia ran after her.

Simon leant over the parapet, feigning to be absorbed in observing the courtyard. Secretly he felt much mortification and when Mary presently came and perched herself beside him, he turned away.

"Ann and Amelia are a pair of silly wenches," remarked her ladyship.

"Yes," he agreed. "Mistress Cottington had no need to show herself so proud. My lord, your father, warned me long ago."

"What about?" asked the girl curiously.

"Why, that I was not to make love to any of you, to be sure."

Mary's cheeks crimsoned.

"They are only a pack of children," she cried hotly.

"Of course. And I'm not one to try and make my fortune by marriage. Indeed, I told your father that I would certainly never marry anyone that was not a true Catholic."

"Why not?" retorted she. "Other people do."

"My family do not," replied Simon. "We have our pride too. Yours is pride of race and ours is pride of Faith."

"My father said you wasn't to talk of that, and indeed I think you have grown monstrous arrogant," grumbled Mary, and sliding off the wall, she withdrew, leaving Simon to drum his heels against the rough masonry and swallow down his mortification.

After this little episode Simon held himself aloof from the ladies of the house, devoting himself arduously to field exercises and, with considerably less vigor, to his studies. He pined for the time when he might be allowed to follow his patron to camp, for he was nearly sixteen now and considered himself a man.

The battle of Edgehill was claimed by both sides as a victory. The winter passed without decisive engagement, each party occupying a certain number of towns without meeting much resistance.

Summer came and Lancashire was thunderstruck by a new blow to its pride. On the faint pretense that the King's enemies might occupy the Isle of Man, Lord

Derby was relieved of his command and ordered to repair thither without delay. Fine words could not disguise the situation. The Earl was considered too powerful a partisan—the King's friends—self-styled—feared Strafford's friend even as they had feared him. The King, flouted the man on whose loyalty he knew he could count till death, in order to placate his fair-weather allies who were prepared to swim with him but not to sink.

CHAPTER XI

THE older children were with Lady Derby in the vaulted chamber, where she did business of a morning, when the express arrived. Simon was there, too, copying a list of armory stores.

Her ladyship let herself go for once, pouring forth her indignation in a mixture of French and English.

"*Ah non, c'est trop fort!*" she exclaimed. "This is too much, I say! *Quoi!* You assault Lancaster and Preston and occupy them for the King, and you would have taken Manchester had he not called you away at the critical moment, so that the Manchester gentlemen, in disgust, went over to the other side——"

"Nothing can excuse them," interrupted her husband. "Listen, dear heart——"

"Listen! Am I not listening?" she retorted vehemently. "Can you deny facts? *Ah, c'est ce* Newcastle who is your enemy! And Hyde—that beggarly Hyde! Where did *he* spring from? Kings should not associate with *canaille*."

"Should we go?" whispered Simon.

"Nay, nay. Keep the door fast!" replied Lord Derby, in terror lest this tirade should be overheard.

"The Queen was right," continued Charlotte in the same violent tone. "Did she not call him 'Lache' to his face, before my lady Herbert?"

"Hush, my dearest. Loyalty and honor must rank before pride——"

She laughed in a high, strained note.

"Pride! You are eaten with pride, *mon cher*. Too proud to take your rightful place and crush these upstarts who throng about the King! Did not you abandon Lancashire to wait upon the Queen? The Parliament troop overran the whole country, and what was my lord Molyneux doing, whom you left in charge?"

"Indeed, there is a long tale to be told of the injury he did me," murmured James, the shadow deepening on his already downcast face. "But my love, the children——"

"Well, let the children hear. It is right that Charles should know how you have been treated. Relieved of the command of the Lancashire forces, put over other troops of which you knew nothing, your advice scarce listened to at the Council of War—and now this!"

"We must remember that I had accounts of disturbances in the Island of Man as far back as last autumn——"

But again the lady interrupted.

"Yes, and instead of securing your own property, you repaired to York to the Queen. Then all goes wrong here and you return. Then when you are about to ride to attend your father on his deathbed, the King sends you a frivolous summons—yes, I must say it—frivolous! Manchester is lost to him and you are blamed! Oh, 'tis insufferable."

Lord Derby's face assumed the expression of fixed endurance which Simon knew well. He was swayed by his lady's opinion in all small things, but once he had made up his mind on any subject, he became inflexi-

ble. She was right perhaps in accusing him of pride; it was unfortunate that this very pride was a characteristic which he respected in himself, linking it with his honor.

"Dear sweetheart, affection blinds you," he said fondly. "Go, Mary and Charles—go, Simon! Speak not of this."

Charlotte was calmer now and he drew her down upon the couch beside him.

These two utterly dissimilar beings loved each other greatly.

As they closed the door the young folks heard the lady exclaim: "And all the sacrifices of my family have been made for this!"

Mr. Rutter, the new tutor, called the boys to their studies, but Simon's thoughts wandered. A blackbird's loud, sweet call echoed up from the lilac bush far below the window of the turret room. The June air blew in fresh from my lady's neglected rose garden, wood pigeons were cooing somnolently in the elms, and tame pigeons on the stable room. It was strange to think that war was going on, and that men of the same blood were fighting and hating each other in the warm June sunshine.

A fortnight later Simon was sleeping with the heavy soundness of tired sixteen. It was the dead hour of the night, not quite two o'clock, when his chamber door creaked open, and Lord Derby entered, the lamp in his hand flaring wildly in the draught from the open window. He did not stir until gently shaken by the shoulder, and called by name, and then sat up dazedly, groping for his rapier which hung on the bedpost.

"Simon, wake up, 'tis I. Leave the sword—wake, boy!"

At the peremptory tone the sleeper roused himself fully.

"Aye, my lord! What is it? An alarm?"

A great gape interrupted his speech.

"Nay, no alarm. I go at once to Man, Simon, and Charles and you are to accompany me."

"At once? Now?" gasped Bradshaigh. "Then I must go bid my mother adieu."

"There is no time," said Derby. "Dress quickly and break your fast. I will send a man to do up your saddlebags. I have written to Mistress Bradshaigh and her ladyship will see that the letter is conveyed."

"But to leave her so!" stammered Simon. "Oh, my lord, permit me to ride on and speak with her! I can easily rejoin you before you reach Liverpool."

"We sail from Fleetwood—and there is not a moment to spare for we must catch the tide. Dress with speed and then come to me in my room."

Simon's mind was in a turmoil as he struggled into his boots and riding-clothes. His dominant thought was of his mother's distress. The Isle of Man! Why, it was a day's voyage even in fair weather, and who knew when he would get back again! And there was not one priest on the Island—Master Nevile had said so. Poor Master Nevile, who had been lying with a shattered thigh somewhere up in the North ever since the assault on Lancaster!

The property had been sequestered by Parliament men, and Colonel Rigby had been over time and again to seek old Master Richard who dared not show his face at home. The King's Commanders were fain enough to accept the recusants' help in the field, but had no scruple in abandoning the sick or aged.

Mistress Bradshaigh had hitherto been left in peace, but how would it fare with her when Lord Derby was far away, and both the Neviles were in hiding?

It was with a very serious face that Simon presented himself at the door of the little book-room. The shut-

ters were still closed and the air was heavy with the fumes of the lamp. Lord Derby's face was ravaged with care and a wakeful night. He was writing in his book of meditations, murmuring the words half-aloud.

"Under the shadow of Thy wings I fly for refuge, O Almighty God of power and glory—Simon, Simon, I am grievously stricken!"

"What my lord? How my lord? Are there fresh tidings?" stammered the boy, quite awe-stricken at the sight of the tears which stood in Derby's eyes.

"Yes, troubles and more troubles—evil and discontent everywhere;" he sighed. "See, where I have just laid my finger into the Scriptures."

Simon approached, and read from the open book.

"Now they that are younger than I, have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock."

Simon kept his eyes fixed on the printed page, and forced himself to speak, though nearly suffocated by his own boldness.

"My lord—pardon me—you will have peace and leisure on the Island, and maybe God wants you to go there in order that you may have time to think of religion."

"To think of religion!" repeated the Earl in astonishment. "Why, of what else do I think, except indeed of his Majesty's affairs?"

"But I mean true religion," insisted Simon bluntly—"the Catholic religion."

"Simon, have a care! Are you trying to convert me to Popery?" said his friend, vexed at the boy's temerity, and yet half laughing.

Simon raised his head; his face was very red, but his direct gaze sought his patron's.

"I would if I could," he observed. "And of course I

know it does not rest with me, nor with your lordship either. We can but pray to the Holy Ghost."

"Why do you say it does not rest with me? I would not change my religion for yours for all the world. You are deluded, my poor boy. Your religion would have me believe my sweet, lost children are outcasts burning in hell."

"Why, my lord, who told you such rubbish? Our Church teaches naught of the kind. Did not Jesus say: 'Suffer little children to come unto Me'? Where should such innocents be but nursed on His Knee, as He quoted Himself. Dying so young, they will have gone straight to Heaven most likely, without even passing through Purgatory."

"Enough, we must start. But, Simon, you may speak to me freely when we are alone together."

It was hard to see the dear outlines of the home woods dimly purple on the horizon, as they rode by within a few miles of Moor Grange, but Simon's heart felt lighter since his talk with Lord Derby.

The day was fine with a brisk wind. Lord Derby retired to the cabin, but the two boys remained on deck, now gazing towards the Welsh coast, now eagerly scanning the open sea as though their destination could already be visible.

Simon was sad as he watched the low white sand hills which bounded the flat, marshy coast behind which lay his home. At last he turned away, looking resolutely forward at the great, blue craggy outlines of the Welsh mountains. But soon these sank away out of sight, and the shining waves raced round them on every side. The screaming sea gulls fell astern and vanished, and the little craft sped on alone, the only moving thing between glittering sea and sky.

Simon was early astir next morning. He came on

deck soon after it was light, and found that the cutter was racing so smartly through the waves that all was wet with sparkling foam. The sun flamed only half above the horizon, making a long, shining path across the water; and as Simon gazed about with dazzled, sleepy eyes, a sailor sang out from the mast-head:

“Land ahoy!”

CHAPTER XII

IT WAS some time before the island was visible to those on deck, and when it did appear it seemed as impalpable as mist. The Captain told Simon that it was anciently supposed to be inhabited by fairies, who caused it to be hidden in a blue vapor, so that ships from the equidistant parts of Britain—the coasts of Ireland, Scotland, Cumberland and Anglesea—sailed by without suspecting its existence. Though Simon smiled with some superiority at such childishness, the glamour of the tale excited his imagination. The Island really looked like a blue cloud, just hovering over the sea, and he had a fantastic fear that the ship might sail right over the spot and find nothing there.

But presently Lord Derby came on deck, looking pale and worn. He fell upon his knees at the gunwale and prayed aloud for a blessing upon Man.

“O God, this Isle shall wait on Thee and in Thine Arm shall trust! O God, be gracious and propitious to this Isle, be Thou faithfully obeyed here; be bountiful to the people in good gifts both of sea and land.”

While he was yet praying, the faint reverberation of a cannon shot was heard. The Captain declared it was a salute from the fort at Rushen, and intimated that the

boat had been seen from the lookout on the top of Scaefell, Lord Derby's colors recognized and the Governor notified. The Captain recommended a landing at Douglas, for the rocky bay at Rushen was difficult of access. The watchman would have ample time to note which harbor the vessel was making for.

Simon learned in reply to eager questions that a perpetual watch was kept on the top of Scaefell, the highest eminence in the island. Each parish had to furnish its quota of householders in rotation, and there were heavy penalties for any defaulter.

"There is a good deal of grumbling about it, I believe," added the seaman, dropping his voice that it might not reach Lord Derby's ears, "especially since the Earl's warship was captured. These here Manxmen are fain to stick to the strongest party, and there is one always ready to whisper that that is going to be Parliament."

"Why, I thought the island was loyalty itself, devoted to my lord here and all!" exclaimed Simon.

"Maybe I've said too much," returned Captain Leather. "But when the Earl appointed a new governor, he should not have left the old one on the island. 'Tis ill to turn your back on a beaten cur, if you don't want your heel nipped."

These words made an uncomfortable impression on Simon's mind, and he longed to discuss the warning with someone trustworthy. But he had no faith in Charles' discretion nor did he greatly favor the new tutor, Mr. Rutter. The other persons who accompanied the Earl were more of the quality of superior servants than gentlemen to whom such a private matter could well be confided. He held his peace, therefore, as he hung over the rail, edging ever closer and closer to his friend and patron, determined to watch well for any threatening or sullen faces amongst the crowd which could

now be seen, in ever growing numbers, lining the sides of the little harbor.

But after all nothing could have been more loyal and enthusiastic than the greeting which the island gave to its lord. There were cries of benediction, tremendous cheering, outbursts of welcome. Lord Derby responded with affability and his face became so radiant that Simon suspected he had inwardly dreaded a less kind reception. He had almost forgotten the Captain's words and his own resolutions when a little, old man emerged from the crowd and brushed against him as he mounted one of the horses which the Governor had sent for the accommodation of his lordship's suite. Simon paid no attention at first, suspecting no intentional rudeness, but when the action was repeated a third time, he looked down inquiringly. The man was dressed like a peasant in a fustian cloak and shoes of untanned leather laced onto the feet with thongs—"carcens" the islanders called them. He was hurraing with the best, and when he presently tore off his hat to wave it, a deeply wrinkled face was revealed with shrewd, deep-set gray eyes.

"Simon Bradshaigh?" he whispered, without looking up.

Simon started.

"Bradshaigh of Moor ——"

"Grange," added Simon almost involuntarily as the stranger broke off.

"Do you believe in fairies, young master?" whispered the other.

"No, I don't," returned the Lancashire lad abruptly.

"Oho! You do not! Well, if you visit the Fairy Hill in secret at five o'clock to-morrow morning, maybe you'll change your mind. But keep it secret; other lives depend on it. Be secret or you may slay a friend."

He laid his hand on the boy's wrist with a curious

firm grip, as though to intimate that he meant to convey a serious message.

The cavalcade was moving off and Simon dared not delay.

"I'll be there," he said, in a low voice.

All during the subsequent proceedings, the review of the Guard, the Governor's address, the state entry into the ancient Keep, Simon's mind was busily at work.

He had made cautious inquiries of the two gentlemen between whom he sat at supper. Both were of the Governor's train and affected to be mighty contemptuous of the Isle and its inhabitants. Simon had to feign an interest in the straggling little village of Rushen and the "House of Keys"—a wretched thatched cottage—and was obliged to imbibe a lot of desultory information before he discovered what he wanted. About three miles from the Castle lay the pretty sheltered bay of Port Erin. Nearby stood some huge slabs of slate known as "The Giant's Quoting Stones," and a little further on was a barrow named by the superstitious Manx the Fairies' Hill.

One of the gentlemen, Ensign Tildesley, invited the boy to accompany him to the top of the Castle when they rose from table that he might look over the darkening land. At this time of the evening, hills seemed magnified into mountains, and to a boy like Simon, bred in flat West Lancashire, they seemed very fine mountains indeed.

There was Snaefell inland, with a light winking from its watchtower, and away to the west was the bald brow of South Barule from which the three kingdoms could be seen.

"There below us is Poolwash Bay—that means the Bay of Death," said Tildesley. "It is very shallow and the tide draws strong against it. You will see the rocks on the further side are carved into curious grottoes and

queer animal shapes. That great pillar at the point is called Scarlet Stack."

Simon stared down at the deathly bay with its rim of great black slabs of stone, and wondered how he was to get out of the fortress on the following morning. The outer wall was twenty-five feet high, and beyond that was the moat and glacis. He turned impetuously to his companion.

"I would like well to explore the cliff and bay to-morrow morning, but alas our tutor is an early riser. I care not how early I get up if I could but escape and have a few hours' freedom before it is time to study."

Tildesley pulled at his beard.

"You would get into mischief most like," he murmured.

"No, indeed. I am turned sixteen, Ensign, and discreet enough—my lord will tell you so."

"Take care where you bathe then," returned Tildesley good-naturedly. "You will probably sleep the round of Queen Elizabeth's clock, which we can hear ticking in the chapel just below us. But if you *do* waken early, make your way to the guardroom, and I'll tell Sergeant Gray he may let you out at the postern with the kitchen folk who go to buy the fish."

Simon accepted this offer thankfully, and from that moment his interest in Manx affairs sensibly declined. The mysterious message was continually in his thoughts—what could it mean? And whose life would be endangered by its revelation? Could it have any connection with Captain Leather's information? That at least he was free to repeat, and late that night, when Lord Derby retired to his own apartment, Simon made his way past the pages in the little antechamber and knocked at the door.

Lord Derby was alone, and showed surprise and a little displeasure at the appearance of his visitor. He

made a movement as though to hide the light chain mail corselet which he had worn all day under his tunic and which he had just taken off and flung over a chair.

Seeing Simon's eyes fixed on it, he smiled somewhat sadly.

"Aye, Simon, you see I was prepared against false play."

"It is just of that I would fain speak," said Simon; and he repeated the Captain's words without further preamble.

The account proved unexpectedly irritating to the listener. He was peculiarly sensitive to criticism and apt to suspect disloyalty in anything short of unqualified approval of his policy.

"But you were able to explain things to Leather," he exclaimed. "You gave him the true history of this Christian?"

"Faith, I did not even know his name!" exclaimed Simon. "Christian! Was that the late governor?"

"He used me very ill," said Derby, flushing darkly. "My poor mother had appointed Captain Holmewood—a weak, needy man, and on her death I was desirous to shift him off in haste. He had run through a good fortune before his appointment here, when he was at Court and used to haunt good company."

"That scarce seems a good apprenticeship for ruling this island," murmured Simon, as he paused.

"No, indeed—you see how right I was. And yet though I pensioned him well, his removal greatly angered some of my noble friends at Court."

He sprang up as though stung by the recollection, and then flung himself down in the stone window seat, leaning his head against the mullion.

"The people here gave you a most hearty welcome," said Simon presently. "They will soon know and love

you and then Master Christian will be powerless to do you any mischief."

"With God's blessing I trust it may be as you say," returned Derby in a more cheerful tone. "Good-night Simon. Keep silence about this. Have you spoken of it to Charles?"

"Nay, my lord, I have spoken to none but you."

"That is well," replied the other.

He moved to the table again and opened his manuscript book of meditations. Simon withdrew and went to his own chamber—his thoughts eagerly occupied with the morrow. He dared not go to bed, fearing to oversleep himself and miss the tryst, but seizing a blanket and a pillow he flung himself down on the floor below the window which was cut through the ten-foot thickness of the wall.

The sound of the waves beating on the shingly beach lulled him to sleep, and he awoke stiff and cramped with the dawn wind blowing in his face. It was strange to find himself in a strange land, far from all he loved, girt in by the sea, perhaps the only Catholic on the island, a hundred stormy miles from any priest!

This thought lay heavy upon the boy as he slipped out of the Castle. Only a few sleepy men-at-arms were astir for it was barely light. He kept along the coast running every now and then to warm himself along the grassy track set thickly with wild flowers.

At Port Erin the folk were gathering at the quay-side; Simon avoided the village and struck inland, climbing a little hill. The mist was rolling up and the sun lay dull and red upon the smoky horizon. He made out the Quoiting Stones, standing black and grim against a background of dewy grass, and walking a little further, came to a heathery mound which he rightly identified as the Fairies' Hill.

The spot was lonely and a certain anxiety possessed

the boy as he went slowly forward. This secret summons was strange enough and he feared that it might be part of an adverse move against Lord Derby. He thought of his father and muttered a prayer to beg his help and guidance.

And then, through the soft morning air there came a sound which took his breath away—a sound low and sweet and yet so strange that Simon stopped dead. The sweet silvery notes continued and resolved themselves into an air—an air so inexpressibly dear that tears leaped into Simon's eyes. Ave, Maris Stella! It had been Squire Bradshaigh's favorite hymn.

Ave, Maris Stella! repeated the fluting notes; Hail, Star of the Sea!

"Oh, Father, Father!" called Simon, running blindly forward.

But it was Master Nicholas Neville who rose up from among the boulders, flung away the elder pipe on which he had been playing, and held out his arms.

CHAPTER XIII

THE relief and joy of finding an old friend instead of the suspected enemy were so exquisite that for a moment or two Simon was struck speechless, and Neville held him close in his arms.

"I suppose you are real—not a blessed vision, Master Nicholas?" he cried at length.

"Why, Simon lad, did you not know? Did you not guess? Your mother told you surely that I had taken refuge here?"

As he spoke Neville drew the boy into the shelter of the group of elder bushes in which he had been sitting

and from which he had cut the whistle. His old homespun cloak was spread out upon the damp turf, and Simon sitting down at his invitation, quickly told of the sudden departure from Lancashire.

"My poor mother—I fear she will be sore vexed," he said in conclusion. "I had but time to write her a few lines. My lord wrote also. O Master Nevile, when I heard Our Lady's hymn sounding forth here among the mists, I could hardly believe my ears!"

"There is no one, alas, on this island who could put words to the tune," said Nicholas. "And my good friend Master Curran, the schoolmaster is keeping watch for me. Now, Simon, if you can speak with Lord Derby alone, best tell him I am here. He must take no outward cognizance of me."

"Yes, but—dear Master Nevile, is it from choice that you wear these clothes? Because—because you know, sir—I—I have a gold angel that my lord gave me at Christmas," stammered Simon.

For Master Nicholas, who had been wont to go clad in black velvet—well-worn, it is true, but good Flemish velvet all the same, with a cocked hat and a trailing crimson feather, was now dressed like the poorest fisherman on the island. His frieze jerkin and slops though coarse and clumsy were carried with an air of distinction, but it hurt Simon to mark that blue woollen stockings and untanned calfskin had replaced his buff boots and silver spurs.

"Nay, lad, I have all I need," returned Nevile, smiling. "Dame Julian and my wife keep me provided, but I'll call upon thee should I ever have cause."

He pulled down his woollen cap on his crisp, dark hair. His dark eyes were as bright as ever, but his face looked older and more lined, and Simon divined that this enforced exile and separation from all he loved was inexpressibly irksome.

"Yes," continued Neville after a pause, "it is as well that Lord Derby should know where to find me, should he need. I will show you where I dwell, with an old retired schoolmaster, who is a fair student, well-versed in the Fathers."

"A Catholic, sir?"

"No, not yet. But I hope perhaps some day he may be reconciled. If we could but get a priest upon the island! There is a little scattered flock of Catholics—poor souls, they look up and are not fed!"

"And can you do nothing, sir?"

"Well, I have written to the Jesuit Fathers at St. Omer's, and I have sent word to my uncle, the Carthusian——"

"But what can he do? Are not Carthusians strictly enclosed?"

"Aye, child, but he can pray. Prayer is the greatest weapon on earth—and the prayer of those who live for God alone is wonderfully potent! But you have eaten nothing yet! Come, we will seek good Master Curran, and he will give you an oatcake and a slice of goat's cheese to eat as you return. For I would not have you marked upon the homeward way, and it grows late."

He rose painfully, and Simon picked up the little elder flute he tossed aside. As they walked together through the gorse bushes which shrouded the base of the barrow, Simon questioned his friend. Was his wound well healed?

Master Nicholas returned that it was judged he was lamed for life. He added that he now passed under the name of Burton. Leaning on Simon's arm he limped down the hill to where Curran awaited them. He proved to be the old man who had attracted Simon's attention on the previous day. He pointed out his cottage—a poor, little reed-thatched hovel, flanked by beehives, which stood by itself a little way above the village, but de-

lared that it would be perilous for Simon to accompany them there. He would himself guide him back to the Castle by a little-used path which ran under the cliff and was submerged at high tide. A stranger would be quickly noted, his presence commented upon, and anger might ensue. Hungry though he was, Simon instantly agreed, and bade Master Nevile an affectionate farewell.

In spite of his age Master Curran was extremely active, and Simon found that it was all that he could do to keep up with the nimble, worsted-clad shanks, which hopped over the slippery stones as easily as one of their owner's oats. The old gentleman turned back when the curved point of Derby Haven came into view. Simon's spirits rose as he hurried along. The sun was gaining warmth and the cliff was covered with wild flowers, and there were cushions of sea pink and wiry sea lavender at the very edge of the tide.

Mr. Rutter was prowling about the garden in search of his missing pupil, and was disposed to take great exception to his early morning ramble. Lord Derby would certainly be informed, he said. But before he could lodge a complaint, Simon perceived his patron, inspecting the fortifications with the Lieutenant, and managed to whisper a request for a private word with him.

Lord Derby did not confide in the Archdeacon, but he evidently considered the boy's news of some importance, for after their talk he gave orders that outside of study hours, Simon Bradshaigh was to be allowed his liberty.

"I would desire you to allow the boy to ramble about the Island between the hours of study," reported Derby. "He will be responsible to me." In vain Mr. Rutter urged his disapproval.

"But only think, my lord, how puffed up the youth

will become, if you allow him the immense honor of daily conversations with yourself. Were it not more suitable that he should report himself to me?"

"If I thought so, Master Rutter, I would have given you orders to that effect," said Derby stiffly, and Mr. Rutter bowed and withdrew, feeling rather discomfited.

He treated Simon with marked coolness for a day or two, but the boy was careful to be very respectful to his tutor, and took pains to relate everything that he had learned about the Island which might be useful to its future bishop. So Master Rutter presently forgot his grievance and became good friends with his pupil.

Indeed Simon was soon on excellent terms with everybody. He was readily interested in other people, but without that curiosity which characterized Charles and made him tiresomely meddlesome.

Simon soon picked up a few words of the Manx language, induced an old fisherman to take him out in his boat, and explored the whole Island either afoot or on horseback.

The natives proved friendly but very reserved. It was obvious that they distrusted a stranger, and yet they were childishly eager to hear all he could tell about the mainland. Most of the younger folk could speak a little English. The elders had an unfeigned affection for the House of Stanley, but among the younger men Simon detected the exchange of sly glances when Lord Derby or the Governor were mentioned. He was horrified to discover that his guardian looked upon him in some sense as a spy, and expected him to find out everything that he could—whether the Manx had secret leanings towards the Covenanters and puritans, or whether they were still firm adherents of the Church of England.

"But they do not talk openly to me, my lord," objected Simon when this was put plainly to him. "They

know well enough that I should keep nothing back from you."

"But Simon, this is a question of policy—you need not blazon your own sentiments abroad."

"No, my lord, but I cannot play a part either. But if you want to learn all about the Island you should meet Master Curran. He is a scholar too, my lord, marvelous well-read. He has a copy of Josephus in Hebrew, and he knows Saint Augustine almost by heart. I cannot understand ——"

Simon stopped short.

"What cannot you understand?"

"That he is not a Catholic, my lord. Why, Master Nevile—Master Burton, I mean—says that the difficulties folk make against the Church nowadays were all proposed and answered by Saint Thomas in the Thirteenth Century."

"What difficulties?" demanded Lord Derby sharply.

"Why, about individual interpretation of the Scriptures, and the necessity of grace, and against the fallacy that everything we have to believe is written down in the Bible."

"But surely you believe that too? You hold the Scriptures sacred?" exclaimed Derby in consternation.

"Oh, yes," returned Simon. "But we don't depend on them. If all the books in the world were destroyed it would make no difference to the Church. Our Lord told the Apostles to teach, not to write. And He promised that the Holy Ghost should stay with the Church so that she should always teach right."

"Yes, yes—the Church—but which Church?" murmured the older man feverishly.

"There can be but one," returned Simon firmly. "One Church, one spouse of Christ. Hark ye, my Lord, let me be your guide about the Island. You will be safe enough and the folk will like to see you trust yourself familiarly

among them. And I'll engage to find a secluded nook where you can meet Master Curran, aye, and Master Burton, too."

Lord Derby, as was his habit, made no reply at the time. But on the following morning Simon was summoned to ride with him, and found to his great joy that he was to accompany him alone. He fingered the dagger in his belt as he rode and wished the pistol holsters in his saddle were not empty. It would be so glorious if he were suddenly called upon to defend his lord!

But all the green isle seemed at peace. The few peasant folk they met saluted respectfully, and Simon turned his full attention to acting as a guide. Lord Derby took but scant interest in the "Giant's Quoits," but when they reached the Fairies' Hill, he suddenly drew rein.

"It is here you are wont to meet our friends, is not so, Simon? Go, then, and ask them to come hither."

"But, my lord—must I leave you alone?"

"Yes, lad, alone in God's care," returned Derby, with his sudden, sunny smile.

When the boy had departed, he dismounted and stood holding his horse by the rein, while it eagerly cropped the short turf. Overhead innumerable larks were singing. There was no other sound, except the far-away crooning of the tide. The skies were blue and full of sunlight; it seemed as though a blessing visibly covered the little Island.

Yet the man's heart was in a turmoil. Sometimes he seemed to be hanging over an abyss. "The protestant champion" men called him.

"O my Savior," he groaned aloud, "if I could but know whether my feet are planted on a rock, or set upon a quick-sand!"

CHAPTER XIV

MANX fishermen became masons that summer, for it soon became known that Lord Derby was not only bent on repairing old fortifications but on building new ones. Hango Hill, where criminals were executed, was to have a block house upon it, and a little island just off Derby Haven was to be the site of a circular fort.

One evening when Derby had been expatiating on the beauty and peacefulness of this "blessed Isle of Man," as he loved to call it, Simon heaved a deep sigh.

"But to think that Our Lord has no home here!" he exclaimed. "That spoils all!"

"What do you mean?" inquired Derby sharply. "There is a church in every parish and no lack of orderly worshippers."

"Yes, my lord, but there's no priest," returned Simon bluntly. "You cannot have Our Lord's sacramental presence without a priest."

"Alas, boy, how your blindness persists! My branch of the Church has Holy Orders as well as yours."

"Why did Queen Elizabeth pretend to consecrate bishops then? As if a woman could!" cried Simon in disdain. And then seeing the anger and distress in his guardian's face he continued more humbly: "Forgive me, my lord, but when I see the old abbeys, and all the ruined sanctuaries, I feel as though my heart would burst. No home for God in all this place! No priest to say: 'This is My Body—This is My Blood.'"

Simon bent his head reverently as he uttered the sacred words.

There was no reply, and after a moment he broke out again vehemently.

"How long must I stay here, my lord? Why, I have

not received Holy Communion since Easter, and that is four months ago."

"You can come to Communion Service whenever you will, Simon," said Lord Derby gently.

Simon flushed and then rode a little nearer.

"My lord, do you believe that what Master Rutter distributes is the Blessed Sacrament? And Master Cutler at St. Mary's in the town? Know you what he does with what is left over after the service? He throws it out to his swine."

"You lie!" cried Derby violently.

Simon's face was pale now—for even though there was nothing in the Vicar's refuse but ordinary bread, it outraged him that so little respect should be shown even to what was merely an empty symbol.

"Go see, my lord. Or ask him—the good man will probably admit it freely. Any sign of consideration for it as more than ordinary bread, he would deem idolatrous."

"The prayer book enjoins that all remains should be reverently consumed by the minister though 'tis mystically that our Divine Savior is present," stammered Derby, striking his breast, and groaning to himself.

"Well, read St. John again, my lord, and then go talk to Sir Gilbert Cutler—they call all clergymen 'sir,' here. And if a priest did land on the Island," he added eagerly, "would you think it your duty to apprehend him?"

James started violently.

"Who? I?" he exclaimed, and leaned down, endeavoring to contemplate Simon's hastily averted face. "I will see that the Church of England is upheld and supported here, as is my duty," he went on. "But as to attacking any other Branch—or—or pursuing individuals"—he broke off, adding in a hasty whisper: "Let me not be

told of it. If such a man come let me not be made aware of him in my official capacity."

Simon duly reported this conversation to Nicholas Nevile, and next time the fisher fleet went out, one little boat parted from the rest and made its way over seventy miles of tumbling sea to Liverpool, laden with island produce, which was sold on the quay, and a letter which was delivered at night at the door of the ancient house of Greenhalgh. From thence the missive passed secretly from hand to hand until it traveled over seas again, and eventually reached the Rector of the Jesuit College at St. Omer's in Flanders. The next day a newly-ordained priest received his orders for the English mission—but not that field already fertilized by the blood of martyrs, for he was to labor alone, far from any colleague, in a green island equidistant from England, Ireland and Scotland. He would find there one friend—a lame man living in hiding, who had pledged himself to supply all that is needed for the celebration of Mass. For everything else, for the necessities of life itself, the priest must trust to Providence alone. Yet he set forth undaunted, arrived in the late autumn with a little stock of French wine to sell, and found his way to Master Nevile's humble cottage. Next day the tiny, weather-beaten, reed-thatched cot looked outwardly the same—but the "hungry, faithful little flock," of whom Master Richard had written to the Rector, knew that it was in truth the Palace of the King of Kings.

Rushen Abbey was in ruins; St. Michael's, Port St. Mary, and countless other shrines were razed to the ground; but the priest at the homemade altar, lifting up his consecrated hands, had called down his Savior and his God from highest heaven.

"It is the Mass that matters!" This had been the cry of Catholics from the first dawn of persecution. Young Father Martin was quite content to risk a hideous death

in order to provide Mass for Master Nicholas, Simon, two catechumens and four or five lapsed Catholics who had forgotten all about the religion handed down by fathers and mothers, who had never received the Sacraments or seen a priest since their childhood, but who still retained a veneration for the very word Mass, though they knew not what it signified.

The Flemish wine-merchant's ostensible trade was at a standstill, for the Parliament ships cut off all imports from the Island.

Father Martin had some skill in medicine which he exercised among the islanders. He also became a fisherman, went out with the boats and had his share in the herring harvest. But first of all, he was a fisher of men; and the little house in which he dwelt was so crowded in the early mornings that late-comers were obliged to kneel outside among the rocks and gorse bushes.

Simon was obliged to replace his scanty wardrobe with island homespun, and even Master Charles was obliged to wear patched garments, which irked the young gentleman exceedingly.

Simon received occasional letters from his mother, duly forwarded in my Lord's packets, but he wearied for a sight of her. Charles, too, was thoroughly tired of the Island and plagued his father for permission to visit the mainland. He and Mr. Rutter did indeed depart for some months in the spring of 1644, but instead of waiting on the Queen at Exeter as his father intended, Lord Strange went to visit his mother's illustrious kinswoman, the Queen of Bohemia, she whom Sir Henry Wotton celebrated in unforgettable verse.

Simon was happier without him. The two boys were too dissimilar in character not to jar upon each other, and Charles was markedly jealous of his father's favorite.

When Lord Derby first established himself at Castle

Rushen it had seemed that life on the Island was to prove idyllic. The murmurs of discontent were hushed in welcome, the islanders were glad to find a ready sale for their provisions for the support of the family and garrison, and the little fleet of boats, which my lord was wont to allude to as "my navy," plied to and from the mainland bringing extra stores, books and news.

But one after another Lord Derby's ships set sail from the Island and returned no more. Parliamentary vessels could be descried, sailing proudly between the Island and the mainland, cannon shots had been heard, and it was feared that the loyal craft had been either sunk or captured by the rebels.

Early one morning in December a messenger came hot foot from the watch tower on Snaefell to report that Captain Leather's sloop had approached under cover of darkness and was even then putting into Ramsay harbor. An hour or two later the burly Captain himself arrived, with packets of letters long overdue and sorry tidings of affairs in England. The enemy had overrun Lancashier, he said; Sir Thomas Fairfax, the General-in-Chief, was there in person, and had received a commission from Parliament to reduce Lathom House. Colonel Ashton of Middleton, Colonel Egerton of Shaw, Colonel Holcroft of Holcroft and Colonel Rigby with their regiments had all been summoned to assist him.

"If you have letters for her ladyship best send some trusty fellow with me," he concluded. "The times are too dangerous for me to leave the sloop. Faith, my lord, these rebel frigates run up and down the seas like greyhounds after a hare!"

"Let me be your messenger, my lord," besought Simon. "My place is with my mother if she is in danger, and if not, I should be serving the Countess."

James looked musingly at the eager boy.

"I am acquainted with Black Tom Fairfax," he said at length. "He should be with us, but on the other side he is like to prove a dangerous enemy."

"I know all the byroads," urged Simon, "and, if need be, I can pass as a countryman. My lady will triumph, I know. She has many gallant gentlemen to defend her, and my Lord Strange of course."

"Charles is not at Lathom just now," returned Derby hastily. The fact perturbed him mightily. What could Charles mean by going abroad at this moment when his mother was in danger? He had long endeavored to blind himself to the fact that the young man was by no means heart and soul with the royal cause. "I will write my letter small and you shall carry it, Simon," he added with a sigh.

"You had best get ready quick, young Master," cried Leather. "For the wind has changed and will serve. I'd as soon get away before those dirty rebels mark me down."

Lord Derby repaired to his cabinet immediately, but when Simon presented himself an hour later, the table was littered with books and his patron was occupied in compiling a list of the different ways in which letters could be conveyed to a place besieged. It was a fascinating occupation and he laid it aside unwillingly, bidding Simon read through the paper and commit the items to memory, while he dipped his quill again and began his letter.

"My dear, dearest heart . . ."

Meanwhile Simon dutifully perused the jottings, concealing his impatience as best he could. None of the suggestions appealed to him at all.

"How to conceal a letter in a green wound"—"How to pass a cypher on an embroidered waistcoat"—

It would have to be a mighty long siege if one could

stop to work a waistcoat, thought he, and the news would surely be somewhat stale by the time it was finished.

But after all, the letter confided to him contained no secret information, as he presently learned to his chagrin. It would have been exciting to be the bearer of a letter which he would have to defend with his life!

"Kiss the little ones for me," said his lordship—"particularly my Billy. And greet my lady with my dearest love. Stay with her and obey her as you love me, Simon. I would I could accompany you, but I have his Majesty's express commands."

Captain Leather was eager to depart, and kept his horse at a gallop all the way to the port. It was a rough, squally day, and they had not been long afloat before one of the Parliament ships came into view, swung round and fired a salvo which fell short. Old Leather called all his seamanship into play and an exciting chase began. Now Simon heaved on the yards with the sailors, now he clung to the rail, trying to make out the position of the aggressor through the flying surf. At length a storm of rain came on, darkening all the air, and enabling the sloop to change her course unperceived and fly before the wind towards the Welsh coast. It was a narrow escape, and Captain Leather muttered maledictions as he worked his way laboriously back to Liverpool through the cold winter night. Day had dawned again before they reached harbor, and Leather accompanied young Bradshaigh to a tavernkeeper of his acquaintance who provided him with a stout serviceable cob.

Simon was in high spirits as he rode away. He felt that he was a man, and had set forth upon a glorious adventure. His rusty clothes, stained with sea-water, and his old patched boots might have been more gallant, and a handsome charger more fitting than the jogging nag he bestrode, but such thoughts troubled him little. In another hour or two he would be at home.

He approached the city wall gaily enough, but there a sight met his eyes which made him realize that things were grievously altered since last year. A group of steel-helmeted troopers stood there with shining breastplates and pikes in their hands. Two or three held Bibles also, and they seemed to be hotly arguing in loud, singsong voices. The gate stood open and Simon passed through unchallenged with some country people who had brought produce to the market.

"Roundheads!" he muttered to himself. "And Yorkshire folk by their tongues. What can our lads be about to let them occupy Liverpool!"

It seemed to him that Lord Derby's place was here on his own soil, and he decided that others would blame his absence.

Great was the joy at Moor Grange when Simon burst into the yard, hallooing lustily. Little Fan ran out of the goose pen and let all the flock stray unheeded into the garden. Grandmamma came hobbling to the window leaning on her ebony cane, the aunts rushed out of still room and gallery, one flour to the elbows, the other trailing long tangled streamers of the wool she had been carding. But Simon's mother was first of them all, and the cob strayed about the yard with trailing rein while the boy leaped from the saddle and clasped her close. There were more fine lines than he cared to see on her sweet patient face, a little sorrowful pucker about the mouth had become permanent; and there were weeds among the cobblestones, the yard gate was unhinged, everything looked neglected and poverty-stricken.

"We're naught but women folk here now Simon," quoth Katty, when the hubbub of welcome had subsided a little, the cob was stabled and the family gathered together in the dining-parlor. "All the men are gone to the wars."

"We got the hay and corn in first," went on his

mother. "But God knows if they'll let us keep it. They say Fairfax is collecting supplies all over the country."

"But, mother, where is our army?" asked Simon with a puzzled look. "The Queen had a great army at York and Prince Rupert to command it, and the King was well provided too, when he sent my lord across to the Island."

"Lord Derby should be here," declared Grandmamma. "Who should the folk follow if not their own Earl? 'Tis a capital mistake for him to go away and leave yon Frenchwoman in charge here."

"It was at the King's express command that he went!" cried Simon loyally.

"There's no one has more respect for the King's gracious majesty than me," declared the old lady. "But his lordship did wrong none the less. He's too anxious to have his Royal Highness under his protection on the Isle of Man to my thinking; and he'd have done a deal better to stay here and send the Countess thither."

Mistress Bradshaigh intervened.

"Her ladyship very kindly invited us to take shelter at Lathom House. But indeed, Simon, I think we are better off here. I do not think the rebel general would trouble a household full of women—but I doubt we'll have to hide you, lad."

Simon flushed. Here was an inglorious proposal.

"I wonder if I can still handle a plough," he said evading the issue. "You will scarce have got the ploughing done with only old Will to aid you."

His mother turned eagerly to talk of the farm. Two fields had been laid down to grass, for lack of men to till them. She took little heed of public affairs, but was shrewd enough about household matters. They had lived chiefly on the proceeds of the mill which she had taken back into her own hands, she told him, but they had been sadly oppressed in the autumn by having six rebel

troopers billeted upon them, whose bill for provender had never been paid.

"You'll find it very confusing, brother," declared Fan. "It isn't like a proper war at all—'tis all mixed up, and you'll meet both armies riding about the country every day and all of 'em talking English, of course. It is truly curious. But you can tell one side from another by their dresses well enough. We call the rebels 'crop-ears' and 'round-heads' for they wear their hair cut close and no wigs."

"The King will come to his own again, no doubt," declared Simon. "Only," he added, half to himself, "I would to God that His Majesty could distinguish a friend from a foe!"

"Amen to that!" said Grandmamma emphatically.

CHAPTER XV

THE long-threatened siege of Lathom was an accomplished fact, as Simon found out when he approached the fortress in a vain attempt to deliver his letter. He learned in Ormskirk that Sir Thomas Fairfax had had an interview with her ladyship that very morning—there were many conflicting reports as to what had passed at this meeting, but all were clear about the result—on the return of the General-in-Chief the Parliamentary forces were ordered to deploy and to envelop the house, and the garrison had responded with a salvo from all their cannon.

Simon returned, much perturbed, to take counsel with the Catholic neighbors. All the men capable of bearing arms were either in the Countess' train or away with the King's army, but by good luck Master Richard

Nevile was at home on one of his secret visits. There was no one for whose advice Mistress Bradshaigh had more respect, and though this time it ran sharply counter to her own wishes, she accepted it without demur.

The household at Moor Grange would be safer without the presence of a young man of military age, opined Master Richard, and he upheld Simon's desire to make his way through the encircling force and offer his sword to Lady Derby. Grandmamma agreed. The lad was bound in honor, she observed, since he was already in Lord Derby's service and had a letter for his lady.

Simon, ever practical, decided that the adventure must wait until he had ploughed the land which was to produce the necessary food for the family.

"I'll plough and seed, Master Richard," he said. "I'll start to-morrow. And meanwhile maybe you could devise some plan by which information could be passed through the enemy undetected. If we were short of provisions, for instance, we might make a sally in one direction while you sent folk in with flour or corn on the other. My lord made me read a whole list of ways he got out of books, but I doubt I have forgotten 'em."

"A very good thought and worthy of thy father," declared Nevile.

And while Simon ploughed, and eluded the Parliament troopers, with the assistance of all his womenfolk, Master Nevile, ensconced in the priest's hiding hole behind the paneling at Greenhalgh, worked out ciphers and found hardy messengers—an old woman eventually proving the best.

The larks were caroling gaily overhead as Simon drove his team, a little uncertainly at first, but soon straight and clean as his hand regained its cunning. Mistress Bradshaigh looked down on him with pride from her window as he led forth his horses—he was growing into a fine man, this son of hers, with his yellow

head and broad shoulders and blue eyes that could show fire when he was indignant or excited. He was seldom moved, though—a quiet, gentle lad, kind to his little sister and obliging to his aunts and kin. He was a loving son, too; Mary loved to feel his broad palm in her plump little cushioned hands. She dreaded the day on which he was to make the attempt to pass through the enemy's forces, running the hazard of being shot at by friends as well as foes.

Simon divined her anxiety, and resolved to keep his plans a secret. At first as he toiled in the dear familiar fields, he had watched for the signal which was to warn him of the approach of Covenanters. Aunt Katty would let fly a white streamer from an upper window, or little Fan would be heard shrilly calling the turkeys. Then Simon would hustle his team into a shed, or hide with them behind the patch of willows by the big marl pit. After a day or two a better idea occurred to him. When Sergeant John Todd, or, as he had rechristened himself, Scourge-of-Belial Todd, came riding by, seeking for likely men to be pressed for the labor of raising the ditch before Lathom House, he perceived a yokel, as he thought, grinning at him over the hedge.

"How now, thou spawn of Babylon," he began pleasantly, "is it thus thou thinkest to labor in the Lord's vineyard?"

"Vineyard?" repeated Simon stupidly, pushing back his conical hat in feigned astonishment.

"How is the Hittite to be smitten and the Scarlet woman made to howl for mercy? Why delayest thou there, a devourer of husks and filth ——"

"Filth! It's none filth! It's own good Lancashire bread-and-cheese!" interrupted Simon, assuming a broad burr and pointing indignantly to his wallet.

The Sergeant perceived that his eloquence was wasted.

"You can earn better for yourself here and hereafter

by serving the army of the Lord," he observed. "Canst dig, fellow?"

"Nay, nay—I'm for no armies," cried Simon, backing away with a look of alarm.

Todd leaped his horse into the field and measured Simon's sinewy young figure with keen eyes. He had grasped the ploughshare once more, and shouting to his team, sent it ripping with unerring straightness through the rich, brown loam. When he returned at the end of the next furrow it was to find Sergeant Todd still waiting, but this time with his heavy pistol in his hand.

"Take in the horses," he ordered. "They are wretched beasts, or I would have had them likewise. And fetch thy coat, for thou art to follow me."

"How's that?" inquired Simon, his heart beating fast. Perhaps his plan was going to work too well, and the enemy would try to force him into their ranks.

"I want laborers to raise a ditch against Lathom House. Thou shalt be liberated when the work is at an end," returned the soldier, who could speak plainly enough when occasion demanded. "There's plenty of good rations, and that is all you base clods desire, whose belly cleaveth to the earth, and who will doubtless go down to hell, unmindful of higher things."

"Mun I tell the mistress?" queried Simon, scratching his head and grinning again as though pleased at the idea of a change of occupation.

"Nay, I have wasted too much time already," said the other. "Come, be swift, for I have a way of hastening backsliders ——"

And he made a meaning gesture with his weapon.

Meanwhile, Simon had perceived his sister's little form climbing up the bank and peering anxiously between the twigs. The interview had not been unnoticed by the

anxious womenfolk, and she had doubtless been sent to glean news.

Simon signed to the child to come near and whispered in her ear as he unhooked his team from the plough.

"All is well. Tell my mother I have found a way to enter Lathom with no danger at all. Canst lead the horses to the yard, Fan?"

"Why, you know I often do, and old Will is there on the lookout," she responded, staring hard at the grim man in the steel cap, as she reached up to take the rein. The great quiet beasts walked away, with the little girl dragging at their bridles, all impatience to take the news to the house.

"Hold my stirrup," bade the Sergeant. "And quick march, or it will be the worse for thee."

Part of the journey was accomplished on foot, and part perched uncomfortably on the crupper behind the burly soldier. As they jogged along, Simon's captor endeavored to make him sensible of the privilege of being allowed to serve an army of saints.

"I allus thowt as saints was peaceable folk," gasped out Simon.

He was speedily undeceived. The present day "saints" were extremely bloodthirsty people, to judge by Scourge-of-Belial Todd. The earth was to drink the gore of their enemies.

"The ungodly shall meet with ruin!" he declaimed; "they shall be destroyed from off the face of the earth. Howl, thou daughter of iniquity that entereth arrogantly over the threshold ——"

"Who's yon?" Simon could not forbear the interruption.

"The Frenchwoman whom they call Countess of Derby," returned the Sergeant in his ordinary tone. "Neither shall her silver nor her gold be able to deliver

her," he resumed in the loud nasal groaning voice which was held to denote piety among the men of his kind. "The day cometh—the day of alarm against fenced cities."

"But I thought 'twas your side was making the fences, Sir!" exclaimed the irrepressible pillion-rider.

"Hold thy tongue, and a murrain to thee!" exclaimed the other, aiming a blow at him. He continued his howl of triumph, but with a forced note; it had lost the conviction of first enthusiasm. "Mark ye, all the evil-doers who stand against the just and godly, their blood shall be poured out as earth and their bodies as dung."

They had now reached the camp which presented a scene of great activity. Simon noted country carts loaded with hay and straw filing up to the horse-lines, and he wondered if the owners had been paid. He was promptly put under the charge of one Corporal Jackman, and ordered to join a dozen or so of young countrymen armed with spades, who were already at work. It was horrible to think that he was actually toiling on the side of the enemy, but Simon was anxious not to go to his friends until he should acquire all possible information which might prove useful to them.

His assumption of stupidity earned him a cuff or two, but led the troopers to speak freely before him, and respond to his apparently aimless questions without suspicion. He was able to count the pieces of ordnance, and to discover that Colonel Rigby, who had recently come to take command, had brought with him a field mortar, though it was not yet placed in position. He found out too that Sir Thomas Fairfax had sent word that the place was to be reduced at all costs. It lowered the prestige of the Parliamentary army that a woman should be allowed to flout it—and a Frenchwoman at

that! Between the Queen's army and the Countess of Derby's Castle it was in danger of becoming a laughing-stock.

It seemed strange to see the beautiful trees hacked down for firewood, and these grim, crop-headed men slaying the deer which had been so carefully preserved. It was extremely difficult to evade the prayer-meetings and holdings-forth, and on the second day Simon decided that his position was untenable—every moment added to his danger. But first he was determined to undo any advantage his two days' hard work had given the enemy, and found a means of accomplishing his design. He knew every inch of the ground, and contrived, apparently by accident, to delve deeply under a certain oak, where there was a hidden spring a few feet below the surface. It was easy to deflect the rising water in the direction of the earth-work and then start an exaggerated alarm.

It was dusk, and in the confusion which ensued, he slipped away unnoticed, but to pass the cordon of sentries was another matter. They stood within easy reach of one another and were good marksmen all.

He turned hesitatingly towards the nearest horse-lines. There was still a wagon there, whose driver was haggling with a petty officer about the price of his merchandise. He wore a wide flapping hat and interlarded his objurgations with phrases picked at random from the Scriptures. Simon crouched down, crawled between the horses, and approached the wagon from the rear. It was empty, and offered no covert of any kind. He therefore crept beneath it and managed to lodge himself precariously on the great wood bar which passed above the axletree. Here he clung with might and main, when the vehicle presently jolted out of camp, past the sentry and into the waste of mud churned up by the passage of horses' feet.

It was difficult to calculate the best moment at which to drop to the ground. Simon counted a hundred after passing the sentry and then slipped off his perch, lying face downward in a rut as the cart rumbled away and expecting every moment to receive a bullet in the back.

As all was still he presently raised his head and reconnoitered. There lay the great bulk of Lathom House, the Eagle Tower from which the flag had been removed at sunset, black against the sky. To his right the camp fires glowed sullenly, but between him and the Castle all was dark and still. Colonel Rigby's lines ended here, and Colonel Moore's only began on the other side of the little thicket. He crept stealthily forward, heaving a sigh of relief as he reached the shelter of the bushes. There were enemy troops to right and to left of him, and even if he should succeed in passing between them unscathed, he was but too likely to fall a victim to some sharpshooter on the Castle wall before he could proclaim himself a friend.

"I spoke a bit too soon when I told my mother there was no danger," he reflected.

Then he crept on again, now over grass and among fern, watching anxiously lest he might disturb some wild denizen of the wood. There was a long open space up to the first row of palisades. It looked endless in the dim light, but Simon forced himself forward. As he drew nearer he could hear the measured step of sentries marching to and fro on their little stone platforms, the click of arms and the occasional rattle of a grounded musket.

"I'll get right under the wall before I make a sign," he thought. And as he advanced, taking advantage of every hollow in the ground, he tried to remember the best place to cross the moat. How long ago it seemed since he had helped to plan its deepening and flooding!

It was a cold night, but the sweat started to his brow

as he pictured himself swimming about, desperately grasping at the slimy wall, while the sentries above poured down shots. It would be almost impossible to cross the water without being detected.

He remembered a cavity on the outer side of the moat where the brickwork had crumbled away. It was near the water tower just ahead of him and might prove a temporary refuge, though scarcely shot-proof, should his presence there be divined before he could make himself known.

"I'll have to chance it," muttered Simon, and he made the sign of the Cross.

"Her ladyship wishes to know what you are firing at? Have you not her strict orders not to waste fire and shot?"

"Aye, Mistress Ann! But there's some one trying to cross the moat. Watch out there, Tom! Hi lads! Bring torches! He'll not get o'er the brink again with a whole skin or I'm a Dutchman."

"It's probably a stray calf—the same as last time," said the girl disdainfully.

But even as she spoke a cry rose waveringly through the dusk:

"Let me in! I'm a friend! à Stanley! à Stanley!"

"I see him!" cried the musketeer eagerly. "There, just where the parapet's broke!"

He leveled his weapon, but Lady Ann darted forward and pushed the point aside. The charge went roaring up among the distant trees. Captain Rosthern came running to see what was to-do, and found Ann craning forward, her face pressed to the loop-hole.

"Who are you, friend?" she cried, her girlish voice rising above the uproar.

"Simon—Simon Bradshaigh—with letters from Lord Derby!"

But only the first words could be heard, for the musket shots had roused the sleeping camp; it now buzzed like a hive, and a crackle of musketry-fire began intermittently all along the earthwork.

"Get him in quick—'tis a friend with letters from the Earl!" cried Ann.

Young Rosthern looked somewhat dubious, but the young lady was imperious.

The water-gate suddenly opened, the narrow draw-bridge dropped down, and Simon, dripping with mud, and hatless, ran breathlessly into shelter.

CHAPTER XVI

THE Countess of Derby was determined to keep the reins of government in her own capable hands. Charles had chosen this moment to leave her, setting off on a visit to his illustrious kinswoman, the exiled Queen of Bohemia. His mother had made the best of this defection in writing to her husband, who was always disposed to be specially critical of his eldest son and heir. Charles, of course, could not foresee that the long-threatened attack on Lathom would follow so soon upon his departure. As a matter of fact, in her secret heart, Charlotte was best pleased to have the management of everything herself. An army in the field was certainly a man's business, she remarked; but a siege was quite another thing, and entered into the woman's sphere of housekeeping and economy. She had made all the necessary preparations, and she was now determined to see that there was no waste, either of provisions or ammunition.

She appointed a certain Major Farmer, who had seen service in Scotland, to be commander-in-chief of her

little army, further selecting six captains to serve under him, all stout-hearted Lancashire neighbors.

Her ladyship did not interfere with martial matters, though she dearly liked to be consulted, but the serving out of powder and shot was within her province, and she attended in person every evening, while her daughters, Lady Ann and certain trustworthy maids, weighed out the necessary supplies and distributed the food rations for the next day.

Simon's entry into the fortress, wet and bedraggled, coincided with the time set apart for this purpose. The drawbridge had scarcely creaked back into place, before Lady Derby herself came to meet him.

"How now, my man!" she cried eagerly. "What news? Is my lord near at hand?"

Simon's telltale face fell, but before he could speak, the lady hastily resumed, speaking loudly for the benefit of the bystanders.

"But nay, I know my noble lord too well! He would not so far fall short of his duty. It is his duty, I say, to guard the Island of Man, until the King grants him leave to quit it."

"He had but just learned that you were in danger here, my lady," cried Simon, somewhat tactlessly.

"*Ma foi!* My husband has no cause to fear. He well knows that Lathom is safe with me—he can trust my loyalty and my faith!" exclaimed she. "But you have letters doubtless?"

"Aye, Madam." Simon hastily wiped his muddy hands and felt in his bosom for the packet. "And I have been yonder for two days with Colonel Rigby's force, and have learned a deal which I would fain tell at once while 'tis fresh in my mind."

Lady Derby made a courteous little gesture to Major Farmer, who in his turn beckoned to Captain Rosthern.

"This lad is an old acquaintance of yours I under-

stand. Do you take him apart, find him a change of clothes and write down all he can tell you. And see he speaks to no one else until I have interviewed him myself. There's nothing so confusing to the memory as to have a lot of folks speiring questions at a man."

"You do not doubt Master Bradshaigh's loyalty, I suppose?" exclaimed Ann indignantly. "It seems to me you treat him more as a prisoner than as a friend who has run the gauntlet of enemy forces to bring us news. Is he to be starved too?"

Simon was young enough to be rather resentful of feminine intervention.

"I am a soldier, sir," he said stiffly to the Major. "And know how to obey orders."

Lady Derby had been quickly glancing through her letter.

"You are too saucy, Ann," she said rebukingly. "But you shall not be denied your ration, my poor boy. Go, Mary, see that a meal is prepared and sent to Captain Rosthern's chamber. I shall count on you, Major Farmer, to send our young friend to me when you have learned all he has to tell. Is my lord well, Simon?"

"Yes, indeed, my lady. And wonderfully busy fortifying the island. His ships have been captured, though—all except Leather's sloop—and that's a pity."

"Ah—the island is fortified!" she repeated, turning away with a little smile of triumph. It was her ambition that the King of England might be forced to take shelter with the King of Man, and that he should owe the recapture of his own heritage to the allegiance of her husband.

Simon looked about him eagerly as he followed Rosthern. He had been received in the first courtyard which was level with the tops of the nine towers which guarded the great wall up which he had climbed from the drawbridge by a spiral staircase.

An ensign's uniform was brought to Captain Rosthern's chamber and he soon perceived that it was useless to question the excited youth until the martial garments had been assumed and the new sword buckled in place.

"Come! What have you to tell of the enemy?" he asked at length.

"Fairfax has drawn off," said Simon briskly. "But he left orders that the house was to be strictly enveloped and reduced by starvation rather than by assault. There're four Colonels left here—Colonel Rigby has the command and the others are all grumbling at having him set over them, because they and their troops were here first."

Rosthern dipped a quill and took careful note of all Bradshaigh could tell him of the beleaguering forces, proceeding later to draw a rough plan of their camp.

"Nay, that's wrong," cried Simon, leaning over him. Forgetting all about military discipline, he seized the pen from the hand of his superior officer. "The men took up the quarrel, so, in order to avoid collisions between the troops, there's a space left on either side of Rigby's lines. That's how I was able to reach the wall."

"I see—a man could easily get through on a dark night. But if your drawing is correct, this unoccupied space is well within the range of both sentries."

Simon nodded.

"They did not notice me, though," he said. "So what has been done once can be done again. Then there's Mother Read—a brave, old widow who goes about the camp selling gingerbread. She'll gather news for us, aye, and bring letters in, too. She's all for the King and Derby."

Rosthern was full of praise of young Bradshaigh's doings when he presently sought Major Farmer. The Scot listened in stony silence. He was a professional soldier

and distrusted the gay enthusiasm with which the young Cavaliers seemed to look upon the grim art of war. Rosthern must keep the lad well in his place, he declared, and not let him think he had done anything wonderful. Indeed his manner to Simon was so stern at their subsequent interview that the boy felt all his elation dashed, and by the time Farmer gave him a curt dismissal, he had concluded that he had done his self-imposed task very ill, and that a more competent person would have ascertained the exact caliber of each cannon.

The Countess's condescension did little to atone for the disappointment. She was more interested in all that related to her husband than in details of the beasts sick in Colonel Rigby's horse-lines, and the estimated number of men under arms.

"These reports are for Major Farmer," she declared. "As for me, I am determined to hold my lord's house till the last man is shot from the turret. No inequality of troops shall fright me from my duty."

"I would my lord could hear you!" exclaimed Simon. "He would be proud and with good reason."

"'Tis only what he has a right to expect," she returned. "Blood royal flows in his veins and mine—we cannot but act kingly."

"Kingly!" Her French tongue had given a queer twist to the phrase, but the virile word suited her well enough. There were folk who said the Countess bore a more manly heart than her spouse. She was certainly more single in her aim, full of confidence and ever unaware of the possibility of a divided duty.

Simon saw little of the family henceforth. The Commander and his Captains dined with the household in the great hall, but the younger officers had their own mess. His life was a busy one; he had much to learn and much to teach the platoon under his charge. He

was a fair shot and was occasionally allowed to replace one of the keepers who had been chosen as picked marksmen, and posted on the nine towers. He had also learned the elements of drill while on the island, and took his responsibilities very seriously. He made no effort to meet the young ladies of the house; but one morning as he was ensconced on the Eagle Tower, making a plan of the enemies' earthworks and revetments as spied from that airy height, there was a sudden burst of laughter and rustling of draperies, and Mary and Ann came through the narrow door on to the platform. The sentry on duty glanced round and then resumed his watch. Simon's paper fluttered in the breeze on the parapet; he pinned it down with a stone, and turned too. He could not hide the pleasure which leaped into his face, but he only said, with true Lancashire abruptness:

"Am I wanted?"

"Only by us," replied Mary. "We heard you were off duty and had come up here, so we thought we would have a word with you."

Ann pouted.

"You have been monstrous impolite," she said. "You have never been next or nigh us."

Simon reddened and stuffed his map into the pocket of his long, frogged coat.

"I am a soldier under orders now," he observed.

"Did you know that you would have been shot in the moat the day you came, only for Ann knocking up young Bill Hesketh's musket?" resumed Mary. "It isn't every young maiden who would have been so ready."

"Oh, that is a small matter," said Ann, tossing her head. "But I think for old acquaintance Master Bradshaigh might have visited us."

Simon shifted awkwardly from one foot to the other.

"I didn't know I owed you my life, Mistress Ann," he remarked. "But indeed I was vastly grateful. You've

no idea how frightened I was, squattering about in the muddy water like a duck in a bog hole."

"A man should never confess to fear in my opinion," quoth Ann loftily.

"Nonsense, Nannie!" exclaimed Mary. "I think you were ever so brave, Simon, and I'm sure my father would say so. Ann holds the same though she will not say it. We've come to hear all about your adventures."

The three young people crouched under the machicolated parapet, as in the old days, while Will Silver, the huntsman, stood over them, musket in hand, and below, at the outer edge of the park, the enemy drilled and marched, to the beating of drums. Presently a bugle rang out.

"That is a call to prayer," said Simon, kneeling up and gazing out under his hand. "You will see the troops filing down to that space they use for a parade ground. Some ignorant fellow will be expounding texts from Scripture."

"I wish they weren't so pious," cried Mary pettishly. "Here are we on both sides, proclaiming ourselves God's chosen friends. We are in the right, I know: 'Fear God and honor the King'—that has the sanction of the Apostles, but ——"

"But what? Surely you are not in sympathy with the rebels?" exclaimed Simon.

"No, only I would some of our men lived better lives. It is sad to see so many ill-drunk at such a time. Not our friends here, of course, my mother has selected them with care. But some of the folk in the army and at Court are sadly raffish."

"And a lot of folk on the other side are hypocrites," flashed out Ann. "Master Milton, the poet, for instance. For all he writes such high religious sentiments, when his wife went home to her parents because she could not bear to hear the screams of his little nephews as

he chastised them—what do you think he wrote to her? That if she didn't come back and make no further complaint, he would marry another lady without delay and he named her too! So poor Mistress Milton was sent back by her father and had to endure the whipping of the poor little boys as best she might."

"Well, but that does not prove much," objected Simon. "Poets are strange cattle in any case, and Master Milton is no soldier."

"I'll tell you of a soldier then!" cried Ann. She lowered her voice and the scarlet color sprang to her cheek; her eyes flashed under their black, arched brows. "I'll tell you of a traitor rather! You both know Master Endymion Porter?"

"The Gentleman of the Bed Chamber, whose daughter Marie was your friend?" said Mary. "Of course—he often waited on my father in London, and Madam Porter too, a lively, quick-tempered lady."

"Well, then," said Ann. "Their son Tom, nurtured in the very shadow of the throne was a Colonel in our army." She dropped her voice to a whisper. "He deserted—aye, he and such numbers of his regiment as he could get to join him. It seems this new General—Cromwell they call him—is all for seducing as many as he can from the King's side——"

"You cannot mean that an officer in the King's army went over to the enemy?" exclaimed Simon.

Ann nodded.

"He did—the traitor! They found a letter afterwards that he had let fall, from Colonel Gardener, the puritan, who had conducted the negotiations. I saw the note myself for 'twas handed about secretly among the Court ladies. 'Ride over as soon after dark as you can,' said he. 'And first we will have a merry night of it. And later I will conduct you to the Commander-in-Chief.' A merry night! We all know what *that* means! I tell

you I sickened of Court and begged my father to ask her ladyship to receive me."

"Your right place is here with your mother and sisters-to-be!" declared Mary kindly.

Simon got up suddenly, glancing at the sun as though to ascertain the hour.

Ann pinched up her lips; her vivid little face seemed to darken, and suddenly to assume an expression of reserve: she did not appear to notice Mary's outstretched hand.

"Traitors are best out of the camp," said Simon at last, with a sigh. "But one would like to think that our folk were all God-fearing, clean-souled men."

"There are a good many like that in Lancashire," said Mary.

Ann glanced up suddenly and smiled. The girls' eyes met, and both looked at Simon. His gaze was fixed upon the enemies' lines, however, and he had drawn forth his plan again. He seemed to have forgotten his companions.

CHAPTER XVII

MAJOR FARMER made a point of treating young Bradshaigh with coldness bordering on severity, and Simon was proportionately astonished and overjoyed when he had secret orders to take part in a sally on the following day. He had applied himself assiduously to his military duties for the past three weeks and had begun to find the confinement of siege life extremely wearisome.

The weather was fine and warm, and the mistle-thrushes—or "stormcocks" as Simon called them—were

singing loudly in the distant woods and in the venerable yews within the enclosure.

Spies had confirmed Major Farmer's suspicions that the new works which were being rapidly thrown up in the enemy's camp were intended to complete the blockade of the house. A platform was being erected, strengthened with masonry, on which a large mortar-piece to fire red-hot shot, was to be mounted.

Two hundred men were to take part in the sortie, at dawn on the following day. Farmer was to lead in person, supported by Captain Rosthern, with Simon under his command.

There was little sleep for the young Ensign that night. He longed for the sally to be made a horse. It would be glorious to charge up the green slopes with banners flying! He was eager to risk his own life, and did not let his thoughts dwell on the inevitable bloodshed which must take place on the morrow. He was going to fight for the Countess and her children, to strike a stout blow for the King and for his kind friend, Lord Derby. When his men were at length paraded, he harangued them in a low voice which shook with excitement. The enemy cannon were to be "nailed" or flung into the moat—the trenches and mortar platform to be destroyed.

There was no drum or bugle-note as the men filed into the courtyard. They numbered more than three parts of the little garrison—if they failed to return, the house must be at the mercy of the first strong assault.

"The enemy yonder are ten to one for aught we know," announced Farmer. "We must not lose a man if we can help it. Keep close together and obey orders. Remember a sally is not like a charge in the open field, and you must quit pursuit the instant the trumpet speaks."

Simon strove to wait with at least an outward appearance of calm, but it seemed an eternity.

Major Farmer descended the stairs first and the procession of men followed him, their nailed boots squeaking on the stone steps. At last Captain Rosthern signed to him and he stepped proudly forward. The first company was drawn up just clear of the palisades. There was no movement in the enemy's camp: they had not yet been perceived in the misty gray light. As soon as the last man had crossed the drawbridge, Farmer began to advance. Avoiding the precipitous slopes to the left, the troops crossed the level ground, quickening their pace to a run as they neared the trenches. Then came shots from the sentries' carbines, and a loud cheer from the Castle men.

"For the King and Derby!" shouted Farmer.

But Simon found himself shouting: "For Derby and the King!"

It was not in the least like war, Simon decided, as he numbered off his men, noted that none were missing or wounded, and sat down to watch them served with ale and bread. It had been more like a scuffle in the village at home on "Mischeevous night," when horseplay and practical jokes were in full swing. There was always a good-humored battle between Simon's adherents and the lads of the next village, and it seemed much the same now, except that a man had a pike instead of empty hands. The Covenanters had been driven from their earthworks, such cannon as could be moved was dragged to the moat and flung in, and the larger pieces were spiked.

Simon saw a counter-attack launched, as he stood at the apex of the mortar-platform, wielding a pick, with more good will than skill, and bawling encouragement to his men. The earth and mortar flew in all directions—the noise of the picks almost covered the explosions of the carbines. Then the trumpet sounded the retreat, the

smoke lifted a little, and it was seen that the enemy had been flung back behind the horse-lines where all was in confusion. As he waited with loaded carbine, while the first line marched back across the drawbridge, he was amazed to see the troops halted and a commanding woman's figure pass through them and mount the stairs alone. It was the Countess of Derby: her delicate hands were blackened with gunpowder and her lace ruffles torn, for she had been outside the defences during the whole time of the sally, cheering on her men, and serving out shot and powder herself.

"They will have greater confidence," she declared, "if they see me sharing the danger."

Simon's heart swelled with pride as he watched her. He did not love her as he loved Lord Derby, but it was glorious to fight for such a noble woman. How queenly she was, stepping among her soldiers without a backward glance towards the enemy, nor a tremor as shot after shot rapped sharply on the wall!

The wounded had already been carried in and Lady Derby went immediately to the improvised hospital to see that they were properly cared for. Five dead were reverently laid in the chapel. It seemed splendid to die for such a gallant cause on such a bright spring day, for the sun had dispelled the mist and the blackbird's mellow note echoed from the little tangle of lilac bushes within the Castle precincts.

Next day the inmates of Lathom House were all agog with expectation. A counter-attack would surely be launched, a fierce assault be made! But hours passed, and the enemy seemed entirely occupied with their own lines which had been flung into the greatest disorder by the unexpected sally. The sharpshooters were doubled upon the broken earthworks, and harassed the Castle sorely, making it quite impossible for the ladies to

take their usual exercise upon the ramparts. New earth-works were being thrown up, and the indignant garrison beheld the country people being marched in under guard, and forced to labor at the defences.

Supplies were got in pretty freely while the enemy were engaged in reconstructing their lines, but once this was accomplished the royalists were closely encompassed. Their friends without sent word by Mother Read (who still contrived to flit through the lines) that several convoys had been captured. They now proposed to collect food and munitions some miles outside the rebels' camp, notifying the situation by lighting bonfires. A sally must then be made, the company chosen going forth on one night and cutting their way back through the enemy's lines on the next. The plan worked well, and the soldiers proved loyal to a man. In repeated sorties not one failed to return but such as lost their lives in the attempt.

In after years Simon looked back upon these expeditions as the most exciting moments of his life. First came the watch on the tower, and the difficulty of locating the exact spot in the darkness. Then he would slip out breathlessly into the thick night, straining his ears to catch the slightest sound in the enemy trenches. And then there was the long crawl across the park, over the springing grass—all the little crushed herbs sending up such a rush of fragrance that Simon often wondered that the sentries did not become aware of their stealthy approach by the wafts of ground-ivy and wood-sage. The most anxious minutes were those which had to be passed, face to the ground, while the leader waited for all his troop to draw level. One, two, three, four—he must count up to thirty, yet it was impossible to make sure of all the shadows in the dusky night—much must be left to chance. Muskets were not used at first—there was a rustle and the thin whine of cutlasses drawn

from the scabbard. Then the signal cry: "A Derby, A Derby!" and the leap into the sleeping trenches!

If the first party met unexpectedly strong resistance and failed to break through, there was always a second company waiting, which issued to the attack from the opposite side of the house in order to divide the enemy.

Colonel Rigby's pickets searched the country diligently by day, and carried off all the horses they could lay their hands on. Nevertheless, there was always a string of beasts awaiting the Lathom men in some hidden thicket or ruinous barn. Once through the Roundhead camp there was rapid progress by narrow lanes, whirling round ever and again to repulse pursuers: the devious approach to friendly halls, whose darkened windows belied the warm hearths and wakeful company within.

Simon visited his mother more than once. On one occasion little Fan insisted on presenting him with a basket of turkey eggs which she had painstakingly saved for him. None of the womenfolk at Moor Grange took the war seriously, and Simon was too discreet to undeceive them. If Mistress Bradshaigh thought it possible to stroll through a double line of bloodthirsty "Ironsides" with a basket of eggs in one's hand, so much the better! He kissed away the sleepy little sister's tears, and resolved to hide her inconvenient gift in some hedge on the return journey. But when he rejoined his companions, each of whom was weighed down by a powder bag, their jeers roused his obstinacy—he shouldered his gunpowder and clung stubbornly to his basket as well. But the delicate speckled eggs were not destined to be enjoyed by the Lady of the Castle as Simon had hoped.

This time the enemy proved more cunning than usual; they had pegged out wires in front of their lines, in which the returning raiders became entangled. Tom Silver's boot was so firmly caught that Simon shouted to

the other men to go on home. The nine towers began to discharge their cannon wildly in all directions, while Simon knelt beside Tom with drawn cutlass, determined to sell his life dearly. Three or four figures emerged from the earthworks and came towards them, stumbling over their own wires. Then a boyish impulse came over Simon: while Silver sawed away with his knife, he let fly at the pale blots of faces which loomed up out of the night. His eyes were accustomed to the dark, and that his aim was true was proved by an explosion of most unsaintly curses. As Tom limped away at last, Simon followed, laughing aloud, and turning every now and again for a parting shot. He had no carbine with which to defend himself and brave Tom Silver, but Fanny's turkey eggs had proved effective missiles!

"Eh, Sir, you got them fairly!" cackled Tom. "They cannot so much as see to send a shot after us."

"Now Tom, not a word if you love me! I'll get the name of Turkey Bradshaigh or some such thing! I'll have the folk gobbling after me if you let on. Come, Tom, promise!"

They were under the shelter of their own guns, and could walk upright, speaking between the shattering blasts of the cannon overhead.

"Well, Sir, you stuck by me in a pinch," said Tom. "I promise."

It was too good a tale to be wasted, however, and the shouts of laughter which echoed from the men's quarters shortly after their entry into the house, made Simon very doubtful whether Silver had kept his word.

Colonel Rigby was extremely incensed at the truculent spirit of the garrison and ordered his subordinate, Colonel Egerton, to press the siege with the utmost stringency. By dint of raising gun platforms in some places and hollowing out the ground in others the gun-

ners began at length to get the range of the house. The stout, stone walls withstood the bombardment well enough, but the garrison, country folk under fire for the first time, were bewildered and not a little alarmed at the repeated shocks which made the solid towers quiver beneath their feet.

Lady Derby maintained a perfect calm, only expressing her opinion of the barbarity of the opposing General in daring to bombard a lady of quality in her own house. One day as she sat at dinner with her daughters and superior officers, a cannon ball crashed into the room, narrowly missing her head with its net of rubies and shattering the panelling behind. Her ladyship considered this insult past bearing and instantly summoned a Council of War, at which she herself presided. Her advice was that a frontal attack should be launched, this time on a grand scale.

The attack was made three days later, again at dawn. This time to his great chagrin, Simon had no part in it, for Captain Rosthern was left in command of the Castle. Captain Radcliffe led the van, Captain Chisenhall the main body and Major Farmer the reserve.

The assault was launched with great vigor and pressed with such determination that scarce an hour elapsed before the Derby banners of black and gold fluttered triumphantly from the broken ramparts of the Parliamentarians. Presently such cannon as were mounted were brought back in triumph, and heaved into the moat—the house standing too low to make use of anything except the ordnance already perched on the towers. The garrison greeted each gun in turn with loud cheers: when at length the redoubtable mortar-piece was dragged to the gate it was greeted with such enthusiasm that the Lady of the Castle declared that it should be conveyed into the courtyard and preserved as a trophy.

The roundheads reoccupied their battered lines dur-

ing the night, but lost many men during the following days when they were exposed to the fire of the Countess' "choice marksmen." Many civilians, forced to labor in the camp fell victims, and Simon's heart burned with rage as he watched from the eagle tower the dead being carried away—poor, honest country lads, torn from their dewy fields and sacrificed to the rebels' bitter animosity against their King!

There was an enforced lull after this glorious victory. Practically all Colonel Rigby's artillery was destroyed or badly damaged. The gleeful garrison computed that beside the famous mortarpiece, he had lost five long cannon for throwing grenadoes, and twenty-nine smaller pieces.

On the day after the battle, Simon was ordered to present himself in the Council Chamber. He emerged scarlet with excitement to find the young Stanleys lying in wait for him.

"It's a secret I know and I'm not to speak of it, but you'll kiss my father for me, won't you, Si?" urged little curly headed Ned.

"Moll, it was rash to tell the little ones!" exclaimed Lady Amelia virtuously. "The brats must needs prate."

"My father would have missed their loving messages then," returned her sister, lifting Billy on to her knee. "See, Simon, we have prepared meal for you here in this antechamber. You are to wait until the—you know what—are parceled."

Lady Katherine pushed forward a chair.

"Sit down, Simon. We'll all wait upon you," she cried, and proceeded to ladle out a large helping of the succulent venison pie.

Simon's rations for some weeks past had been salt beef, a handful of peas and a badly baked hearth-cake.

He felt it would be more heroic to declare himself above the lure of meat and drink at such an exalted moment. But at his stage of growth youths are always hungry, and he was too sincere to play a part.

"I did not know I was so sharp-set," he declared with a laugh, and sat down to the feast.

"Simon," said Ann, with a little catch of the breath, "do you realize that there is danger—great danger—imminent danger—in what you are about to undertake?"

"Of course he does!" cried Mary, pausing with the wine flagon in her hand. "But he knows it is for the King, and he is ready to die for him."

Simon looked up from his serious enjoyment of the pie.

"It is not the thought of dying that I mind," he observed. "What I fear is that I may make a mull. You know the ironsides would have small scruple in impounding her ladyship's jewels were they to fall into their hands."

"Indeed they are no gentlemen!" exclaimed Ann.

"I do not know that they are greatly to be blamed," said Simon, feeling very liberal. "For we must admit that the jewels are the sinews of war, and the money they are sold for will be used to pay our soldiers."

"Nonsense, Simon—do not defend the rebels! How can you expect honor from men who would purloin a lady's jewels, forbid the entry of a little fresh milk for a sick child—even deny the passage of those three poor, sick gentlemen who will not be able to bear arms these three months! Give me a gentlemanly war, I say!"

Simon shared her indignation here. He agreed sieges should be conducted with due courtesy on both sides, and a lady must be treated chivalrously, even when she occupies the position of a Commander-in-Chief.

There were upwards of fifty ladies in the Castle, some

of whom belonged to the Countess' suite, while others had taken refuge with her when their natural protectors had gone to the wars. There were many children too, who stared the privations of the garrison, filled the narrow turret chambers to overcrowding, and added greatly to the cares of the mistress of the house.

Amelia and Katherine presently carried off the little ones, and Mary and Ann, sitting down on either side of Simon, whispered in his ear, their yellow and black curls tickling his cheek.

"Where will you bestow them, Simon, say?"

"I haven't thought yet," he responded.

"What will you do if you are stopped?" queried Mary. "If these jewels be lost Mother says we are undone. Soldiers from the poorer sort of people cannot afford to fight long without pay, and the rebels have money a-plenty."

"They wring it out of Catholic recusants," returned Simon. "They are always harrying my poor mother and granddam."

"Life is more than money," said Ann with a quick intake of the breath. "And the soldiers cannot spend their pay during a siege, nor succor their folk with it."

Simon stood up, brushing the crumbs from his long-pointed lace collar.

"Well, the roundheads shall not have them if I can help it. But if I do die, 'tis a good death, and her ladyship has promised to stand by my mother. And you two"—he hesitated a moment—"you must pray for me."

He looked at them both, suddenly conscious of the youth within him, of every bounding pulse in this strong body of his, which might in a few hours be but a thing of senseless clay.

Then he saluted, with a fine toss of his plumed hat, and went out of the room with his head high.

CHAPTER XVIII

STRANGE tales went through the Covenanters' camp next day and questions were asked which none could answer.

Simon had at first been much opposed to the idea of passing through the enemy in the uniform taken from a prisoner—square-toed boots, broad collar and steel cap complete. But Farmer overruled his objections. It was the best chance, he declared, for the enemy kept a jealous lookout, and Simon was too tall to be easily disguised.

Once convinced of his duty, there was enough of the schoolboy in Simon to make him play his part with a relish.

Who was the prophet—of more than mortal stature fast-growing rumor had it—who had paraded Rigby's lines during the night, calling men to prayer and penance and reciting the lamentations of Jeremiah in tones which made the blood run cold? When challenged the nocturnal visitant had made no direct reply but had poured forth a flood of quotation from holy Scripture not altogether of that comforting order to which the "latter-day saints" were accustomed. There were no fearful anathemas of their enemies, nor yet any extravagant praise of God's Chosen People; and the more eminent preachers in Colonel Rigby's and Colonel Egerton's troops were anxious to meet and confound the new preacher. Sergeant Scourge-of-Belial Todd was particularly keen to identify him, for he had been apostrophized in the night as a "sounding brass and tinkling cymbal" before his own men.

Prophets, though somewhat common among the ranks of the Covenanters, inspired respect, and there was a general feeling that this tall and loud-voiced disturber

of their slumbers was acting in obedience to the Commanders—did he not wear an officer's scarf across his gleaming breastplate?

The farmer who found a rusting harness and steel cap tangled in the rushes in a marl-pit a day or two later, told no tales, but Ann Cottington broke into tears when she found Lady Derby flinging handfuls of yellow hair into the wood-fire on the night of Simon's departure.

"O my lady! You have never let him go dressed like a rebel!" she cried, her quick wits leaping to the truth. "You surely have not sent Simon out in the armor taken from a prisoner! Why, if he is captured, he will be shot like a dog!"

"Ask no questions, Ann," returned Lady Derby sternly. "We will to the chapel."

She swept away followed by her two chaplains. Ann crept after her, snatching up one of the yellow locks which had escaped the flames.

The chapel received them, its plain table for altar, its one lamp set by the reading desk, whence presently Mr. Rutter's sonorous voice echoed forth. How empty it seemed—how cold! The psalms were full of dark phrases, and Mr. Rutter's subsequent discourse appeared to Ann self-satisfied and vainglorious. She found herself wondering what Simon looked like, shorn of his love-locks, with that stern steel cap drawn down upon his brow. Perhaps at this very moment he was being dragged before the opposing General, who would certainly show him no mercy. He would sell his life dearly—perhaps he was already dead! Her very heart seemed to shiver at the thought.

"O God of Battles," she besought, "protect him!"

Nay, it was thus that puritans prayed.

"O God of mercy,"—she was sobbing now—"save him! Jesus, my Lord and Savior, have pity upon him!"

Could there be any harm in appealing to the Mother of God? She scarcely dared. Lord Derby had told her that there must be no intermediary between the soul and God; that it was a popish error to ask the Mother of God to intercede for us. Yet the prophets of old had prayed for their people and appeased the wrath of the Almighty. If Moses, who had sinned, could win salvation for the Israelites by prayer, why should not Mary be invoked—Mary, whom many staunch Protestants held to be sinless? Did not our blessed Savior turn the water into wine at her bidding, although His hour was not yet come? She was His Mother, and had held Him on her knee.

“O Mary, Mother of God, ask Him to spare poor Simon!” She buried her face in her hands.

Simon’s mission was to carry Lady Derby’s jewels to her lord. They were to be sold or pledged to raise money for the payment of the troops, and the messenger was to give an account of the siege and the intrepid little garrison. The gems were worth at least five thousand pounds, and he felt weighed down by anxiety until he could place them in Lord Derby’s hands. It would be a risk to carry them across the sea, but Master Nevile was from home again, and he would not put such a heavy responsibility on womenfolk—he would rather hazard the jewels than bring his mother into danger. He only paused at Moor Grange long enough to wrap up the jewels in little square parcels of wool—just such packets of carded fleeces as the farmers and yeomen of grassy North Lancashire brought as samples to the Liverpool wool mart. The old white mare was dragged blinking from her stable—she would have to serve as Simon’s charger till a better could be borrowed from a neighbor.

He called at Cousin Massey’s lodging in Dale Street,

and waited there, while Mr. Massey, who followed the law, sent a trusty man to search for Captain Leather. But even after the mariner was found, and the sloop manned, they were obliged to hang about the river for two days, waiting for a fair wind. The sea was running high when they approached the island, but Simon persuaded the Captain to try for Derby Haven. The long hours at sea had tried his patience beyond endurance, and he felt that no more time should be lost.

Lord Derby and his young ward had talked long before the low turf fire. Though it was May, the evenings were cold in the unplastered stone chamber.

"The time has come to cast aside all scruples, my lord," declared Simon. "Her ladyship is making a heroic resistance, but it cannot be continued indefinitely. The folk will blame you, my lord," he added bluntly.

"I care naught for that," returned James. "So I am doing right. But Charlotte and the children in danger! Surely my first duty is to them?"

"Indeed you are right, my lord. And time presses. Prince Rupert is now in Yorkshire, and intends to march South to join the King. If he does, without first crushing Sir Thomas Fairfax—why sir, the whole rebel army of the North will sit down before Lathom—and they have less than four hundred men."

"But the garrison could certainly make terms, even if they had to deliver up the house, which God forbid!"

Lord Derby was walking up and down the room in great agitation. "If the worst befell, they would march out with the full honors of war, Simon."

"Alas, my lord, it was so in the beginning, but the tone is changed now! The day I left, Colonel Rigby sent my lady a trumpet with this summons: that she was to deliver up the house immediately for the service of

Parliament; 'that there was no hope of relief from the King's forces which are now in a low and desperate condition, and that if her ladyship refused to deliver up the place upon this summons, she must hereinafter expect the full severity of war'!"

"My God!" exclaimed Derby, turning deadly pale, "I have delayed too long. I have been too nice upon a point of honor. I have brought all my dear ones into jeopardy! But what said my lady? Did she allay his wrath—did she return a soft answer?"

"Not she, my lord!" cried Simon, bursting into a laugh. "She would not so much as write a reply. 'Trumpet,' says she; 'tell that insolent rebel Rigby that if he presumes to send another summons to this place, I will hang up the messenger at the gates'!"

Lord Derby's face kindled.

"Call Moreau, Simon! Send for the Captain of the Guard! Lathom shall be relieved if it costs my whole fortune! My gallant Charlotte! Ah, Simon, if only my son was at her side I should indeed be proud!"

Three hundred gallant gentlemen, many of them refugees from Lancashire, crowded on to Captain Leather's sloop in Lord Derby's train. They landed in Cumberland, and rode posthaste over the moors to join Rupert in Yorkshire. The Prince had already made his name as a cavalry leader, he was easily persuaded to deviate from his line of march to rescue his noble cousin. But Derby was now in a fever; every moment he seemed to see Lathom in flames and his wife and children done to death. He raised money on the jewels, which Simon had duly delivered, and promised a "caress" of three thousand pounds to be distributed among Rupert's men if they would hasten into Lancashire by forced marches.

Simon's spirits rose as they approached Stockton

Bridge, and the long blue lines of Whitewell Fell and Pendle Hill came faintly into view. Perhaps a great and decisive battle would be fought on Lancashire soil, which would win all the country for the King!

But when Fairfax heard of Rupert's advance, he sent hasty word to Rigby, who forthwith raised the siege and retired to occupy Bolton. So that when Rupert arrived at the head of his troops, with bands playing and colors flying, there was none to gainsay him. The great gates of Lathom House were flung wide, and the Countess came forth proudly to greet her husband.

Overhead, on the Eagle Tower, the King's flag and Derby's colors mingled gaily in the wind.

"Was it true you turned preacher to get through the enemy lines, Simon?" cried Ann mockingly, when Bradshaigh, now brave in full cavalier finery, presented himself to the young ladies. "Oh, to think of you, stooping to mimic the crop-eared knaves!"

Simon flushed scarlet. Up till now he had had a triumphant progress, and Lord Derby had been unstinting in his affectionate praise of the faithful messenger. He was taken aback at this reception and stood tongue-tied.

"Will you not preach to us to-night, when Master Rutter and Master Exton have had their say?" she continued teasingly.

"I have fought as well as preached, my Lady Ann," cried Simon, goaded into self-defence.

"Oh, yes, we all know you can fight!" cried Ann, inspired by that spirit of contrariness which suddenly takes possession of young maidens. "Indeed you are a champion, Master Simon—with *turkey eggs*!"

He looked like a young viking when he was angry. How blue eyes can flash! thought Ann. Then as he turned away, she clasped her hands over her heart.

She had wounded him to the quick, she had laughed at him—and all lest he should guess that hidden away under the laces at her breast, there lay a little lock of yellow hair!

CHAPTER XIX

ON THE morrow of the deliverance of Lathom House, Prince Rupert pressed on to Bolton in pursuit of the rebels. Lord Derby accompanied him, escorted by Simon and twenty or thirty gentlemen volunteers, all burning to avenge the treatment to which Lady Derby and her children had been subjected. The Prince ordered an assault, but Colonel Rigby was warned of his coming and the town was well-prepared.

The first storming party was flung back after half an hour's sharp fighting. If the Prince was furious at this repulse, Lord Derby was evermore nearly touched. He was poignantly aware that if Colonel Rigby's force was left intact, his wife and family would be at their mercy, directly the royalist troops were withdrawn. Rupert had made a *détour* to rescue his cousin, but had no intention of delaying his march South by more than a few weeks.

"If you had but your old troops under you, my lord," cried Simon eagerly, as he held the stirrup for James to descend from his sweating horse—"these good Lancashire lads of ours that are under Colonel Tyldesley now! Why, they are your own tenants! They'd follow you to the mouth of hell, let alone through Bolton."

At the brief council which supervened, Lord Derby demanded and obtained the right to lead the van in the next storm and to be given the command of the two

companies originally raised by him, as Simon had suggested.

The men were all in the last stage of excitement and rage for the story had gone round that one of their own captains, who had long been held prisoner, had just been hanged in derision upon the city wall. The tale was believed and magnified. All prisoners, it was said, would be butchered in cold blood. Simon sickened at the thought of Lady Derby's fate, and that of her daughters and their friend should they fall into such hands. Had not Rigby threatened to treat her with the full severity of war? These cold-hearted covenanters would respect no canons of courtesy or chivalry. To slay a helpless prisoner—what could be more vile? To strangle him moreover like any common cheat or cutpurse, instead of shooting him like a soldier!

The assault was launched with a great impetus; a small breach was made, but the "ironsides" ranged within, shoulder to shoulder, once more repulsed the attack. As the line wavered and seemed about to break, Lord Derby pushed his horse forward and leaped to the ground. Catching a half-pike from a soldier, he sprang towards the breach with a stentorian shout:

"Who will follow me?"

Simon was at his side in a flash, the volunteers followed, the Knowsley tenants swung forward with a roar. Lord Derby never stayed his impetuous advance, never looked back to see if he were followed. His dark eyes glared, his white plumes waved wildly as he leaped up the stones of the broken wall.

It was Simon who rallied his own little company, scrambled through the gap and charged down the street to the nearest gate; the guard fled or died, and bolt and bar were quickly undone.

The air was thick with smoke and the clash and clang of pike and broadsword. Here was honest Tom Silver

with my lord's great white charger. Simon fought his way to Derby's side, and helped him to mount. The Prince's troops were swarming into the town, and Derby sounded the charge, and galloped up the high street at the head of his men.

The taking of the town had followed so rapidly upon the Covenanters' first triumph that the townspeople were taken by surprise in the midst of their premature rejoicing. Several non-combatants, who had rashly penetrated into the streets, lost their lives, and Rupert's Bavarian men-at-arms ran riot, pursuing the foe into the open fields, and slaying all before them. Isolated parties barricaded houses, and put up a temporary resistance by shooting from the roofs and windows. Their defenses were speedily battered down and the houses looted or fired.

But in a short time, order was restored, prisoners were rescued, the streets patrolled by cavalry, fires put out, and quarters assigned to the triumphant royalists. Lord Derby was lodged at the Town Hall, and Simon, when he repaired to his room, found him upon his knees. He turned his face, flushed and exalted, to his young friend. Perhaps for the only time in his life he had tasted what his soul craved—the triumph of leading a charge, followed to the gates of death by his own men, all one in the same noble cause, with no tormenting division of duty or of aim.

"Simon," he whispered, "Simon, lad! I would I could have died upon the breach!" He added with the accustomed melancholy reflex: "I'll never touch that pitch of glory again, no, not even if his Majesty rewards me with his own hand."

It seemed hard that this triumphant day should be so closely followed by a personal humiliation. But soon—indeed as soon as the news could be carried and letters received from the Court—it became Rupert's duty to

inform his noble cousin, as tactfully as he could, that the King and his councilors urged his immediate return to the Island of Man, accompanied by the Countess and children. It was a bitter blow, no matter how well the Prince endeavored to present the situation. It was all too plain: Charles's friends would not suffer Derby, "King of Man," and as he was often called in jest "King of Lancashire," to fight, and particularly to win victories for his majesty.

It was but a month later, on the 26th of June, that Lathom House was delivered to the care of Captain Radcliffe and Master Rutter, the chaplain—and the Earl and Countess of Derby and all their train set sail for the Isle of Man.

Once again King Charles had failed his friends and played into the hands of his foes.

Rushen Castle was of ancient structure—its plan was that of a stronghold of the Middle Ages, and though it boasted of royal apartments, these were but narrow chambers some ten feet wide, ill-lighted by slits in the eight-foot thickness of the wall. Lord Derby had planned a new wing to house his lady, but as it was as yet only in process of construction, he took up his residence in Peel Castle in the suite of rooms usually appropriated to the bishop. The Castle occupied the whole acreage of the little island of St. Patrick, which was separated from the mainland by a narrow sound, passable on foot at low tide.

The retreat to Man had been so unexpected that Lord Derby had been unable to make due provision for his children's education. For the moment they ran wild, riding their horses through the shallow channel at low tide, or crossing in boats, galloping over the green hills, exploring the deep craggy glens all the morning, and

sitting out on the warm headland with books and needle-work through the fine sunny afternoons.

Charles returned to the Island a week or two after his parents. He was very submissive and humble under his father's displeasure when in his presence, but almost unbearably arrogant to Simon and the members of the suite.

Ann Cottington had accompanied her friends. Lady Derby was for pressing on the marriage without delay, for it was well known that Lord Cottington had placed much of his fortune in Spain, and Ann was unlikely to be robbed of her rich position like so many of the daughters of those who had spent, or squandered, their all for the King. Ann herself had very decided views upon the subject and for once they coincided with those of Charles.

"I love your father," she told him one day with what he considered most unmaidenly frankness, "but you I do not love at all."

"There are plenty who do then," retorted the young man.

"No doubt," and plenty who love your title and your estate as well," returned the girl. "But I'm not among 'em. Though indeed," she added with a liquid glance from her fine dark eyes, "Queen of Man is a pretty name."

"There never have been Queens of Man, only Kings," cried Charles indignantly. He wanted to scorn Ann, but had no wish that she should play with him.

Ann laughed.

"Yet in the morning when we gallop over the low, green hills, we are Queens indeed—are we not, Mary? Queens with golden broom for crowns."

"I'm more like a beggar-maid than a Queen!" cried Katherine. "For my shoes are wearing out! We had no

chance to get new clothes before we came, and indeed we will soon all be in tatters."

"I could wish there were no mainland," said Mary, drawing one of the little ones on to her knee. "We are all happy here—unless it is Charles—and peaceful and safe."

Charles sighed.

"Aye, truly, it is monstrous arcadian," he agreed dismally; "and monstrous dull," he added.

The young people were sitting out in the unkempt garden beyond the enclosure. There was a breach in the wall on the seaward side, and the dancing waves could be seen through the gap fringed with valerian and orange wallflower.

Simon got up and wandered away. He did not know what had come over him this summer. Instead of rejoicing in the company of the young Stanleys and Lady Ann, he felt an invincible craving for solitude. Just now when Ann sat down beside him, and flung a daisy chain in sport around his broad shoulders, he had felt suddenly sick at heart.

"It's my home folk I think of, I suppose," he reflected as he leaped the nettle bed below the wall, and stared out unseeing at the low green hills. "Little Fan must be a great girl now."

But it was not Fan's blue eyes which haunted him—dark eyes rather, and a proud, arched lip, with a tiny mocking dimple at the corner of it. My Lady Ann often mocked at him, and he bore it well enough, but he could not endure the soft touch of the daisies on his cheek. He quickened his pace now, resolved to ride down to Master Neville and talk the matter over with him. But when he glanced over the cliff the tide was coming in, boiling in white eddies over the rocks in the bay and leaping up the river. He changed his mind again and sat

down irresolutely upon a sun-warmed stone. He was still sitting there, gloomily meditating, an hour later, when a faint cry reached his ears. At first he thought it the voice of a lamb in danger, and he sprang up, listening intently. The sound when repeated had an unmistakably human note, and Simon hurried towards the cliff, and then, with a sudden quickening of terror, turned back to the breach in the wall.

The children were not allowed to enter this part of the garden as the cliff edge, on which the Castle abutted at this side, was unfenced.

"I'm coming, I'm coming! Do not be afraid!" he called, not daring to raise his voice lest it should prove startling.

His eyes swept over the uneven turf. There was the crushed grass where they had all been sitting, and the daisy chain, crumpled and dying. The lush grass was trampled yonder, where honeysuckle and wild rose triumphed among the elder bushes. Simon pushed his way with cautious haste in the wake of other feet and the cry was repeated, from below him it seemed. He dropped on hands and knees, crept swiftly forward and looked down.

Prepared though he was, Simon sustained such a shock that it seemed for a moment as though the great shining ocean far below rose up and smote him. His senses reeled. At the very verge of the crumbling cliff, a little hand grasped the slender, twisted root of a hazel. It was Ann's hand. The girl had slipped over the edge and hung by her wrist; one foot had found a precarious support on a protruding stone, her other hand grasped the clothes of little Billy. The child had fallen from the cliff and a stunted thorn-bush had intercepted his plunge onto the black spiked rocks far below. It was bending under his weight and even as Simon glanced

round for something to grip, he heard the ominous sound of falling pebbles.

The reeling sickness passed and his fingers gripped Ann's arm.

"Do not be afraid, I will not let you fall!" he cried.

"Take care!" she gasped. "Leave me—reach for the child—I cannot keep my hold if you lift me."

Simon's left hand grasped a rock, the edges bit into his flesh unheeded—he had a hideous temptation to wrench the girl back into safety and let the child fall into the abyss. It did not seem as though he could save both.

"Jesu mercy! Mary help!" he groaned, and leaning forward, he seized Ann's velvet sleeve and clenched his teeth upon it. Then he reached down, down, till it seemed as though his sinews must crack with the strain. His finger tips grazed the child's back again and again, yet could not grasp him. And then Billy, hitherto half-unconscious with terror, revived, struggled and screamed shrilly. The movement dislodged the thorn-bush but raised him the necessary fraction, and brought his belt into Simon's frenzied clutch. Then came a rending shock—it seemed his arm must be torn away. Sweat poured from him, the crumbling cliff-edge tore his neck; then as he writhed, striving to make his muscles taut, his face came against Ann's little straining hand. New courage and new strength seemed to flow into him. She must not die—must not slip thus from his very arms into the boiling surf, which roared so far below! It seemed to him that he held her with all the impetuosity of his straining heart. No word could he speak, but Ann's faint voice presently took up his prayer: "Jesu mercy! Mary help!"

In after years Simon could never look down upon sunlit water without a pang of reminiscent horror.

The minutes seemed hours of dreadful struggle, and he never could have told what passed in the brief interval before he succeeded in raising first the boy and then Ann herself over the treacherous cliff edge to the carpet of wild flowers gaily dancing in the wind. He made a second fierce effort to drag them both through the screen of bushes, and then fell face downward torn by agonized sobs for breath. Billy sat up and belowered forth his fears with right good will, and Lady Ann, crouching, white-faced, clasped him to her.

Just then the child was missed and nurses came running in search of him with anxious cries. Simon shrank back into the thicket as the women approached; they raised Billy and Ann, with shouts of alarm, and marveled to see them safe. More and more folk came pouring from the Castle till the air was full of loud voices, and Lord Derby himself came running bareheaded to see what was amiss.

Then Ann and the child were borne off, and all was still again save for the sea-birds' cries and the sweet monotony of the larks, rising and falling in the sunny air.

Simon, crouching stiff and sore among the elders, realized the calamity which had befallen him.

"I doubt 'twould have been better for me to have gone over the edge," he told himself.

This would mean the end of the family. The two lads priests, and Simon the eldest, must needs die a bachelor.

The anguish in his heart was love—and he knew in this bitter moment of discovery and renunciation that it was a faithful, true love, deep as his very being, which could only end with death—love for one whom he was pledged to consider as hopelessly beyond his reach, even if she liked instead of scorned him—even if she were not to be Lord Strange's bride!

CHAPTER XX

THE little yellow burnet roses, with their scent of musk, were all in bloom, their thin, red, prickly branches making a network over the grass. The sea was blue with stiff little ripples like those in an old Italian picture. The land breeze blew out the sweet fragrance of honeysuckle and wild thyme which hung in masses down the cliff.

Simon had been rowing Lord Derby about St. Patrick's islet that he might satisfy himself that his new fortifications at Peel Castle were sufficient protection for the harbor. Presently he shipped his oars and spoke with an effort.

"Will you give me leave to return home, my lord?"

"Why, Simon, I hoped you looked upon my house as home," said Lord Derby. "And all my young people as your brothers and sisters."

His voice was full of meaning. Simon slid out his oars again, pulling mechanically first with one, then with the other, to hold the boat against the drift of the tide.

"Mistress Ann Cottington is not my sister, my lord. I cannot think of her as such; and so I am best at home."

"Perhaps you are right, Simon. I trust, though, that you have not so far forgotten your duty as to speak of your feelings to my daughter-in-law?"

"No, my lord. But I could not be sure of myself if I stayed on here. My Lord Strange," he added formally, "is no hot wooer, either."

"Row back to the islet," commanded Derby. "I shall miss you, Simon," he went on in a softer tone. "I would we were at one in religion."

"And so do I indeed, my lord—indeed I pray for it

daily," cried Simon eagerly. He looked up greatly daring. "My dear, dear lord, why do you not lay your difficulties before the priest?"

"You know very well I expressed a hope that *you* should see your error," exclaimed the older man fretfully.

Simon swung to and fro, three or four times, dipping his oars with strong, measured strokes.

"And if I said that I would conform to-day to the Church of England—if I said that your arguments had convinced me—would you truly rejoice, my lord?"

A look of fear, almost of horror, sprang into his companion's face.

"You have no right to question me—you forget yourself," he cried sharply.

"If I consented to abandon my loving Savior, who changes the substance of bread into His own substance, containing His own Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity, in order to be the food of my soul—if I should exchange this for good Archdeacon Rutter's approval, and for the common bread he distributes at the plain table——"

"Oh, hush, Simon! Be silent! How dare you so upbraid me! To sin against your convictions would be unforgivable—the sin against the Holy Ghost."

The boat rocked as Lord Derby buried his face in his hands.

"If you would but be guided by your own logic, my lord! But God knows how hard it is, especially for those who have great possessions. They call you the 'Protestant Champion,' do they not? Well, all our Catholic champions are martyrs."

"Do you think worldly considerations would hold me back from my duty to God?" inquired Derby in a hurt tone.

Simon rowed harder.

"I think you ought to be a Catholic, my lord," he

answered bluntly—"you would find,"—he stammered a little in his shyness—"you would find that our Lord Jesus is rich to all that call upon Him."

He let the boat drift a little with the tide till Lord Derby ordered him curtly to row to the jetty. As Simon stretched out one sunburnt hand to draw the boat close to the quay, he hazarded one more observation.

"Master Martin, who dwells with Master Curran the schoolmaster, is a Catholic priest."

There was no reply, but a little later as they mounted the steps towards the Castle, Lord Derby turned round and laid his finger on his lip.

"Silence, you understand?"

"I promise," answered Simon.

A day or two later, with his guardian's consent, Simon left the island. He determined to offer his sword to Lord Molyneux, who was still in command of the King's army of the North. Letters to the General and sundry other noble persons serving under him were provided by Lord Derby, but when the smack in which Brads-haigh was making the voyage to Liverpool was overhauled by a Parliamentary brig and ordered to heave to, he thought it wiser to drop his credentials into the sea. This time he was out of luck. An officer came aboard and commanded the Master and Simon to return with him to his own craft where Simon was retained a prisoner, while the poor Kerruish was shepherded into Liverpool, and there relieved of the cargo of island corn and sent home empty-handed.

Simon, after being briefly examined by the Governor, was offered the choice between joining the puritan Colonel Moore's brigade or going to prison, and laconically chose the latter.

There was plenty of good company in the Liverpool fortress. Most of the prisoners were confined for connection with the royalist cause. There were no great

rigors, and their friends visited them freely, but life was very expensive, and Simon parted from his little stock of money and was forced to pledge his fine Holland shirts before his friends obtained his release through application to Sir Thomas Fairfax. Even then freedom carried with it a galling restriction—a pledge not to take up arms for two years. Old Richard Nevile, who concluded the negotiations, advised Simon to make no demur.

“Thou art but eighteen, lad, and there seems small likelihood of Prince Rupert’s returning to these parts. You might lie in prison these five years, and your mother would be in sad straits to provide for you.”

So Simon agreed and was duly liberated. It was an inglorious home-coming, and the sword was indeed transformed into a ploughshare. The joy of his family and the need for his presence on the farm were some compensation. There was, however, a secret cause for sadness which Simon felt unable to reveal even to his mother. The house was full of children. In spite of her narrow means, Mistress Bradshaigh had undertaken the care of sundry small cousins, while their parents were in trouble for their religion and for their allegiance to King Charles.

As Simon listened to the gay voices of his own little sisters, and the hammering of sturdy little shoes on the uncarpeted stairs, he reflected that no child of his would ever be put to sleep in the old nursery, or roll and tumble on the green garden slopes. If only he could forget Ann! But he could not forget her.

Had the King’s arms been successful perhaps Simon might not have felt his own inaction so bitter, but after the first brilliant successes of Rupert’s campaign, defeat followed defeat. Hardly had Lancashire begun to rejoice in the news of his return to the North, when

news came of the disaster of Marston Moor, soon to be followed by the utter rout of the King at Naseby on June 14, 1645. The heir to the Crown fled the country, and there were the wildest rumors about the King.

It was the signal for a renewed attack on Lathom House. Five thousand men were marched against the stronghold which could shelter but five hundred. The King was in hiding, abandoned even by his personal guard; Prince Charles had fled the country, Rupert was conducting a guerrilla warfare with fluctuating results. The royal forces were scattered, the royal prestige was dead, already the King's cause was regarded as a forlorn hope, yet thousands of better men than he were ready to die for him, as they were for all the cold-hearted Stuarts.

By 1647, Charles had drawn his shattered forces together, the imminence of final catastrophe stilled personal jealousy for awhile, and he resolved—as always too late—to march into Lancashire and relieve the faithful house of Lathom. Both sides had now attached an almost superstitious value to the fate of the old Stanley stronghold. Cromwell had always an eye to effect, to the moral impression. Derby was held to be the very impersonation of Protestantism and the Bishops' Cause—well, Lathom must be shattered and Derby must die! The King's troops were defeated at Rowton Heath under his very eyes as he stood upon Chester Wall and the starving garrison at Lathom House capitulated.

With a bursting heart Simon watched the dark columns of smoke rolling across the sky. The Eagle Tower, with its nine consorts, was blown up, the rebels worked night and day, until the solid stone walls, resisting to the last, were leveled,—the grim fortress was razed to the ground. The banners captured at Bolton had all been sent by Prince Rupert to the Countess of Derby—a gallant acknowledgment from one commander to another.

Perhaps Colonel Birch's fury was stimulated by these tokens of former victory. The fall of Lathom was compared to the fall of Babylon, and poor Lady Derby was gratuitously branded with all the terms of obloquy with which that sinful city was branded in ages past.

Bradshaw, the stern President of the Committee, thought no abuse too vile to hurl at the lady's name, though no puritan of them all could be more impeccable in conduct. To Cromwell's vengeful nature the news was sweet indeed, but far away on his little green island, Lord Derby wept for the destruction of his home. He had always loved Lathom, the cradle of his race, and since his wife's triumph it had become doubly dear to him. It had been like a little town, full of treasures. Now the painted windows and rich hangings adorned the halls of his enemies—nothing remained of Lathom but a few scattered stones.

A few weeks previous to its downfall, Derby had actually approached the temporary Government, asking and obtaining leave for his eldest son and some of the other children to live at Knowsley, in order that they might advantageously continue their education. The ruins of Lathom were still smoking when they landed in England. Simon went to wait upon them directly he received news of their arrival. Lady Mary and the two younger boys had remained in Man. They were to follow later, should Lord Strange send word that it would be safe for them to do so. Lady Amelia and Lady Katharine welcomed Simon with open arms—to his relief Charles was not present.

"Old Mistress Kennington is with us here," announced Kitty, naming a worthy kinswoman of her father's, who had long filled the rôle of lady-in-waiting to the Countess. "But no one else save the chaplain and tutors. And yet Charles wants to be off on his travels again. Do not you think that very curious, Simon?"

"Indeed, you should be better protected," began Bradshaigh when Amelia interrupted.

"But you know how the land lies. Whenever Charles gets tidings of that odious Dorothea, he is neither to hold nor to bind."

"*Dorothea!*" gasped Simon.

"Yes—the Queen of Bohemia's maid-of-honor, Dorothea von Kirkenhooven. A flat-faced Dutch woman without a fortune and of very inferior lineage—how could my father welcome such a match?"

"But Lord Strange is to wed my Lady Ann!" exclaimed Simon, and he felt as though every drop of blood in his body was surging into his head.

"Oh, will that ever be? You are sadly behind the times, my little Bradshaigh!" It was the young lady's playful habit thus affectionately to name six foot of stalwart young manhood. "'Tis our belief that poor Nanny has ruined her prospects by her perversity. My father still wishes it but Charles and she could come to no agreement, and then she left us and fell in with Lady Falkland and wants to turn papist. They say her father will cast her off if she persists, just as Falkland cast off his wife."

"Mistress Ann a Catholic!" gasped Simon.

"Oh, true, I forgot! But you were born one, Simon, and that is different. We cannot but think it very ill-done of Ann, but nevertheless if Charles is bent on going abroad, we'll have her here. Shall we not, Kitty?"

"Indeed we will, sister!" returned Kitty staunchly. "Stanleys must stand by their friends."

Simon rode home with his head in a whirl. Ann a Catholic, perhaps soon to be free of her engagement! Cast off by her kin! Life was full of promise again, and as he rode his sorry five-pound nag through the drenched autumnal ploughlands, Simon would not have changed places with anyone in the world.

CHAPTER XXI

THERE was a spell of hot weather that autumn. Day after day dawned with blue skies against which the great beeches at Knowsley held up boughs laden with beaten gold. The light morning frosts soon dried off the smooth lawns, the gardens were full of roses; sweeter blooms, Ann declared, than their earlier sisters.

No word of religion could pass between Simon and the girl, for he never saw her but in the company of her friends. It seemed to him that she was a shade more thoughtful and even more beautiful than of old. She was as gay, as witty as ever, but took care that her sallies should hurt no one. She neither avoided him, nor sought him out; and Simon on his part dared make no advance. His spirits fluctuated day by day, as he toiled in the fields, or worked at the mill which he had taken back into his own hands to eke out the family livelihood. Roger and Peter were persevering in their vocation, and sums for their maintenance had to be sent abroad when occasion offered. It was not often that Simon was able to ride over to Knowsley, but the memory of that golden September and the scanty hours in the sweet-smelling rose-garden stayed with him all his life.

The Covenanters' Army was now supreme and Cromwell its undisputed master, though Lord Fairfax was ostensibly Commander-in-Chief. The Houses of Parliament found their powers suddenly shrunk, their decrees disdained and neglected.

Misfortunes thronged upon the King. The loyal city of Oxford had surrendered in the previous year, and now he knew not where to turn. The growing power of Cromwell's force, its fierce, vindictive proclamation of him as "a traitor to the Commonwealth of England," filled him with apprehension. He thought anything pref-

erable to capture by Cromwell's forces, and in his effort to avoid such a contingency, he made his last and most fatal error.

The King, finding himself beset on all sides, and dreading the English Puritans above all other enemies, delivered himself up to the Scottish Presbyterian army which had marched South against him. The Scottish army sold their royal prisoner to Cromwell for two hundred thousand pounds.

The Presbyterians, who were guilty of the base deed, marched home in triumph with their spoils, and the bitterness of the vanquished Cavaliers was completed by the knowledge that the money, wrung from them by sequestrations and forced sales, had been used as blood money by Cromwell to buy their beloved sovereign.

The country at large, though over-awed by military forces, had never been inimical to the King, and the loyal faction had as yet no fear of the enemy proceeding to extremities. The King was closely guarded at Holmby Castle, and the utmost evil his adherents anticipated was that concessions would be wrung from him which would in future place the governing power in the hands of any turbulent demagogue who should secure ascendancy in the House of Commons.

The beautiful, melancholy, obstinate King was loved almost to idolatry by many, but trusted by no one except his faithful, unhappy wife.

Henrietta-Maria left her new-born baby princess at Exeter and fled to France, where her sons had preceded her. She strained every nerve to obtain help of men and money from the French King.

No doubt the fresh blow which fell upon the Stanleys was the result of the rumors which reached Cromwell's ears. He made up his mind that the Isle of Man—so long talked of as a place of assembly for Irish and French armies—must be reduced immediately. The means he took to this end were quite unexpected, and

caused widespread indignation. The Governor of Liverpool, Master Birch, suddenly appeared at Knowsley with an armed force, and carried off the three young girls prisoners.

Master Richard Nevile on his mule and Simon on the old mare hurried to the city together as soon as the news reached them and found matters even more grave than they had anticipated. The three young ladies—the youngest was not yet eighteen—had been separated from all their friends, and were not allowed the ministrations of even one servant.

"And that is not the worst, neither," whispered Ann, as she drew Simon aside by the sleeve. "They will not so much as even allow us maintenance! No, not a morsel of bread, the Governor said, except what our friends send in for us."

As Simon stood speechless with indignation, little Amelia burst into tears.

"Sister said I was not to tell," she sobbed out, "but I'm hungry! We had no breakfast!"

Simon rushed out to obtain provisions, while Nevile demanded permission to wait upon the Governor. In vain Master Richard urged that the Ladies Katherine and Amelia Stanley had come to England upon an order and permit from the Committee of the Houses of Parliament, it being expressly stated that they were to be free to pursue their education and enjoy a moiety of their father's estate. Mr. Birch merely replied that he had received fresh orders. The Squire then pleaded that Lady Ann, a minor and no relative of the Stanleys, might at least be set at liberty.

"You waste your time and mine," returned the Governor insolently. "The wench is the daughter of the delinquent Cottington, who has borne arms in the service of Charles Stuart."

Nevile could not trust himself to answer.

"You must contrive their release at all costs, dear Master Richard," urged Simon, who awaited him at the gate. "You know how it is with all our friends just now. I ran round to three Catholic houses before I could get a loaf of bread—the folks were willing enough, God knows, but they all have soldiers billeted on them. My cousin Massey tells me the Protestant royalists are not much better off, for this new brand of puritan hates the Church of England only second to us."

Sir Thomas Fairfax, after allowing a few weeks to elapse so that the young prisoners could communicate their distress to their father, commanded General Ireland to write to Lord Derby, requiring him to give up the island, and promising the release of his daughters in exchange.

Sir Thomas had hitherto appeared in a more or less friendly light. He had protected the Knowsley property, received the ladies with all courtesy, and had given orders that they should suffer no disturbance at Knowsley. But now all was changed.

Lord Derby could not keep all bitterness out of his answer. He was grieved for his children's sufferings, he wrote. "But it is not the course of great and noble minds to punish innocent children for their father's offences." He implored Sir Thomas either to allow them to return to Man or to send them abroad to their friends in France and Holland. If he could do none of these, his children must submit to the mercy of God Almighty: they should never be redeemed by his disloyalty.

When Simon waited upon the ladies a few days later, Kitty informed him that Colonel Birch had told them of their father's answer.

"And of course his lordship is right!" exclaimed Ann. "He could not do otherwise; and we are proud to suffer for the King. Only, indeed, it does seem monstrous silly. Have you seen the broadsheets, Simon! I

vow they make as great a to-do about our capture and that of half-a-dozen poor ladies in the North as though we were a battalion of infantry armed to the teeth."

"We can only walk in the court an hour a day, you know, Simon," chimed in Amelia, who did not wish their discomforts to be too much depreciated. "And this chamber! The threadbare hangings scarce cover the cold, red sandstone walls."

"Oh, we do not care for that!" cried Kitty quickly. "You will write, will you not, Simon, and tell my father we are well and merry, and that our friends let us wait for nothing."

"He must hold the island at all costs," declared Ann. "Why, I believe that Man and brave little Denbigh Castle are all the sovereignty the King can call his own."

"The folk are overawed by the Army, but there's many a loyal heart for Charles, if we had but a leader," returned Simon. "Oh, if you had but seen my lord leading his men at Bolton!"

A few days later the whole country was stunned with horror. After a trial before a packed court, a travesty of justice, the unhappy King of England had been condemned to death as a traitor against his own people, and on January 30, he was publicly beheaded.

The best and most unhappy of the Stuarts perished nobly.

"Remember!" he cried sternly to Doctor Juxon, the deprived Bishop of London, who attended him on the scaffold. He divested himself of his "George," that magnificent Order, blazing with forty-two matchless diamonds, and placed it in his hands.

The bishop was later violently assailed and ordered to reveal the meaning of the last imperative command of the man, Charles Stuart.

The answer came readily, and to the hard-hearted puritans it was disconcerting. They had expected Charles'

last words to be a plea that his friends might avenge him.

But the Churchman had his triumph.

"His gracious Majesty bid me carry his George to his eldest son and heir," he returned. "And to urge him and all the King's friends to forgive his enemies as he did."

Cromwell would have exulted in a last taunt—a message of scorn and rancor. The dead King's forgiveness found a chink in his armor of ambition and self-righteousness: it pierced like an arrow to the very core of the man; and though he remorselessly pursued his way, his soul was never more at peace.

CHAPTER XXII

A YEAR passed during which Cromwell climbed to the zenith of his power. His policy in Ireland was admittedly one of annihilation and he was determined that Scotland also should feel his iron hand. The royalists firmly named Prince Charles their King, and though they seemed crushed and helpless during the twelve-month which followed the execution, they were not to abandon the monarchy without another struggle.

In 1650, Charles the Second held his first Court in Jersey and took the opportunity of conferring the Order of the Garter upon his well-beloved cousin, Lord Derby, in acknowledgment of his faithful and loyal service.

James received the news with almost inordinate joy. His sensitive nature craved affection and recognition. He had felt to the quick the rebuffs and ingratitude of Charles I, though no disloyal comment had ever passed his lips. Now hard upon this honor came the news that

the Scots Presbyterians were in arms, and had invited the young King to land in Scotland.

About the same time, Lord Derby received news from another quarter which shocked and grieved him to the heart. Lord Strange had married, against his parents' wish and without their consent, the lady of his choice: Dorothea de Rupa, daughter of an obscure Baron Kirkhoven. He, who was godson of the late murdered King, and should in all things have respected his wishes—he who was practically affianced to the only child and heiress of Lord Cottington by his royal godfather's express desire. Lord Derby had never taken the young people's petulance seriously, and invariably alluded to Ann as his daughter-in-law. This was bitter enough, but there was worse behind. More than one informant declared that Lord Strange, not content with flouting his father's authority, was actually making common cause with his enemies. Later accounts seem to intimate that the young man was maligned in some measure. It is certain that he was quite determined not to draw his sword on the King's side, being of that cast of thought which declares it unnecessary to resist the unrighteous unto blood, or even to any deprivation of property. Perhaps he had met with Master John Evelyn in his travels, and had absorbed his prudent point of view. Nothing could be more foreign to Lord Derby's frank and selfless loyalty, or more repugnant to his mother's ardent partisanship.

The young King was now in Scotland, and found himself forced to comply with much that was profoundly distasteful. He signed the Covenant, declared himself deeply afflicted before God for his late father's opposition to the said solemn League and Covenant, and denounced his mother's "idolatry."

Lord Derby immediately sent his secretary, George Browne to wait upon his Majesty with a letter expressing his dutiful allegiance and desire to serve him when

and wherever he desired. He had also sent letters to the Duke of Hamilton and other friends to beg them to purchase a good provision of fire locks and other arms, that he might be ready to take the field.

Charles met with a reverse at Fife in July, but by a bold manœuvre he evaded Cromwell and his main army, and marched rapidly into England where he summoned Derby to join him.

Lancashire was aflame with excitement. Everywhere horses were being bought up and the young squires forsook their fathers' fields and labored at the horse-block, scouring old arms and rubbing up rusty breastplates and hauberks.

Simon was as busy as the rest, as his two years' parole was at an end. Master Browne had called at the Grange on his way North, and had delivered a note, in his lordship's own large, slanting hand, to bid him be in readiness. The country people were all for the royal cause. Provisions poured in, without having to be requisitioned—a great relief to any military commander of that period.

The King arrived in Lancashire on August 12, 1651, and marched straight through the country without encountering any opposition. He stayed the night at Sir Thomas Tyldesley's home, Myerscough Lodge, and from thence dispatched urgent messages to Lord Derby to hasten to his side.

The new galleot, the "John" and others of the little fleet, were all in readiness in Douglas harbor, waiting for a fair wind. Meanwhile the King hurried on into Cheshire, and issued his first royal summons from Higher Wintley on August 16.

Lord Derby, Sir Thomas Tyldesley, Sir Philip Musgrave and the troop of Manxmen, arrived with seven sail on the previous day, and anchored on the river Wyre. They marched to Weeton the same night, and the fol-

lowing evening reached Preston, where Simon joined them.

The Catholics were all in the highest spirits. The enterprise had begun on the Feast of our Blessed Lady; a true-hearted Catholic was second-in-command; and who knew but the King, after the years abroad under his mother's influence, might not be favorably inclined towards members of the old Faith?

Simon was surprised to find Lord Derby's mood quite at variance with the general feeling of enthusiasm. He embraced the young man warmly, and led him into his private room, regardless of the many old neighbors who were waiting to greet him.

"There's a rock in the way, Simon," he murmured earnestly. "They have put a sore task upon me, My Master, the late Saint and Martyr, was destroyed by it, the League and Covenant, I mean. Do you not understand, Simon, that they wish me to make terms with the Presbyterians? They refuse to assist his Majesty unless I subscribe to the Covenant."

"Then we must win back the realm without them," declared Simon.

"Ah, if it were possible! But they are very strong in all parts of the Kingdom, let alone those who have marched with the King from Scotland. I have no trust in them, Simon, none! What if they should abandon our brave young King as they did his father? Simon, he has trusted his life in our hands."

"We can but die for him, sir," returned the other quietly.

Lord Derby's emotion broke out afresh.

"Die!" he exclaimed, walking feverishly about. "It is easy for youth to die! But if I die now, all dies with me; my wife and children will be ruined—utterly ruined—my noble house will be in the dust forever."

He tore off his beaver, and wrenched the steel helmet from his brow.

"But, my lord, every one says we are assured of victory!" exclaimed Simon. "Just look from the window and see all the good folks that have gathered to ride with you—Neviles, Townleys, Irelands, Masseys, Tempests ——"

"All Catholic recusants, Simon," interrupted Derby. "And the Presbyterians hate them worse than the Commonwealth. But I'll deal justly—I will not stoop; I will not temporize! Oh, Lord, protect the right! Deal just judgment, oh, my God!"

"Would, my lord, that you were yourself a Catholic."

The words rang boldly through the room, though it cost Simon a good deal to speak them; but they received no answer. After a long silence, Lord Derby laid his hand affectionately on Simon's shoulder.

"I am glad to have you by me—sturdy, single-hearted Simon. I have the King's royal commission to raise troops here once more. He is to go forward by easy stages towards Worcester."

Volunteers flocked to Derby's standard, and were enrolled as quickly as they could be clothed and armed. They were young, in high spirits and full of gaiety. Presbyterians looked askance at the dashing cavaliers, but though the Camp was noisy and brilliant enough, and echoed with whistling, laughter and song, discipline was excellent; and it was said that a flock of geese could feed all night in the lines without as much as one feather being missed in the morning.

The Presbyterian creed was a dark and gloomy one, including many of Calvin's harsh tenets. It unhesitatingly decreed that infants dying unbaptized must suffer eternally in hell, and made small distinction between a peccadillo and a grave offence. All was included under sin, and its ministers dealt continually with the doc-

trine of eternal punishment, and seldom touched on the Redemption, or Christ's most merciful love of man.

There was an element of jealousy in the case as well, for it was galling to see men flock from all parts to join Lord Derby, after his long absence, while the Presbyterians were unable to obtain a single fresh adherent in the country.

Simon accompanied his friend to the final interview with the Presbyterian ministers who were spokesmen for their party, and stood behind his lordship's chair with his wallet of papers while it was in progress. It took place in Warrington, and Major-General Massey was present by the King's special wish. He had certain relations with the Presbyterian party, and was universally respected and liked—no better go-between could have been found.

Massey introduced the Presbyterians full of hope, and Lord Derby greeted them most courteously, and explained his own position as tactfully as he could.

"I have come to do his most gracious Majesty all the service in my power," he said in conclusion. "His Majesty has bidden me receive in his name all gentlemen of whatsoever persuasion who should be pleased to come to him—nay, here is the assurance of it in his Majesty's own hand."

Simon had the paper ready, and Lord Derby took it from him, holding it out to the assembly with that sweet, kind smile of his.

There was a pause, and the ministers whispered together, then one moved forward. His harsh, abrupt utterance, his dark visage contrasted strangely with those of the great cavalier.

"I hope, and so do all the gentlemen with me, that your lordship will put away all the papists you have brought with you from the Isle of Man," he said un-

compromisingly. "And that you yourself will take the Covenant, and then we will all join with you."

Lord Derby grew pale, but he answered gently.

"Sir, I hope this is only your own opinion, and therefore I trust that the gentlemen present will be pleased to deliver their own sentiments."

There was another unfriendly pause, and Simon felt as though his heart was turned to stone.

"Oh my God," he prayed in his heart, "do not let him throw over the Catholics again! It will bring no blessing on his cause!"

"We are all of the same mind," returned the Presbyterians at length. "The King has taken the Covenant, and thereby has given encouragement to all his subjects to do the same; and if your lordship will not put away all papists we cannot join you."

"Why, upon these terms I could have regained my whole estate long ago," exclaimed Derby with a flash of anger. "Aye, and that blessed martyr, Charles I, could have regained his kingdom. I come not here to dispute but rather to fight for our present King's restoration. I have undertaken to refuse none of any persuasion that come in cheerfully to serve the King. I am well assured, moreover, that all these gentlemen whom I have brought with me are sincere and honest friends to his Majesty's person and interests."

Major-General Massey added his warm exhortations, but all the time he was eagerly speaking, Simon felt the cold eyes of the ministers fixed vindictively upon himself. There was more at stake than the personal adherence of the Presbyterians, for they had in their custody a vast supply of arms in the Manchester arsenal, and Derby had counted on these to supply his men.

"Disband all papists or we will not join you," they reiterated as Massey paused for breath.

Derby made one last effort, and though he spoke with

calm dignity, Simon marked how restlessly his fingers played with his sword knot, twisting and tearing the silken strings.

"Gentlemen, if you will be persuaded to join with me, I make no doubt but in a few days to raise as good an army to follow the King as that he has now with him, and by God's blessing to shake off that yoke of bondage resting upon both you and us. If not," he gave an uncontrollable sigh—"if not I cannot hope to effect much. I may have men enough at my command, but all the arms are in your possession, without which I shall only lead naked men to slaughter. However, I am determined to do what I can with the handful of gentlemen now with me, for his Majesty's service." He stood looking sternly at them for a moment ere he added: "If I perish; but if my master suffer, the blood of another prince and all the ensuing miseries of this nation will lie at your door."

The ominous words died away on the air unanswered.

Lord Derby took horse a few minutes later and rode away, followed only by his faithful adherents from the Isle of Man, and some few Lancashire Squires who had ridden with him to the meeting.

"We have failed, Simon," he said bitterly.

CHAPTER XXIII

"I AM not a man of war, Simon. I have never studied these things." Lord Derby was seated at a wooden table in the kitchen of the wretched cottage which he had made his headquarters. The rafters were low and smoke-blackened, the door stood open to admit the rain-sodden air.

Simon had unfurled a large map and was making a correction upon it in red ink.

"The whole country is rising for you," he said. "My Lord Widdrington declares that in every place he passed through, riding from Northumberland, the folk flocked to the sound of the drum."

"But that makes it the heavier charge. I am no strategist," insisted James.

"But you have a very penetrating mind, my lord, and the advice of experienced soldiers——"

"Aye—save that each man's advice differs! Well, we must shoulder the burden. But it grieves me that my two poor girls still tarry in prison—and Ann, who should have been my daughter—poor child!"

His face became shadowed with that gloom which always fell upon him now at the remembrance of his eldest son. Simon answered cheerfully:

"It shows how much these rebels fear you, my lord. Colonel Birch was doubtless in terror that you would raid Liverpool to set the ladies at liberty. 'Tis a proof of his dread of you that he hurried them away to Chester."

"Perhaps you are right," said Derby. He rose and came to the door, where he stood looking out at the heavy, straight downpour. There was a mutter of thunder every now and then, but in spite of the weather, the scene before him was one of great activity and gaiety.

The royalist army was striking camp. Tents were coming down, horse-lines being broken up. Every now and then a column of men marched by, breaking into loud huzzas as they passed their leader's quarters. They were somewhat out of step and the dressing of the ranks might be irregular, but there was no doubt about their enthusiasm. They looked smart enough as they marched away, shouting in the rain in their fine new uniforms.

Lord Derby and his staff moved into Wigan that after-

noon, and received a great reception, for the town was loyal and particularly devoted to the house of Stanley.

He was still asleep, early on the following morning, when a messenger galloped into the town to announce that Lilburne was upon them with a vastly superior force—the Lancashire and Cheshire militia—trained troops, accompanied by a detachment of horse specially sent by Cromwell. Once again the redoubtable Oliver had contrived to surprise his adversary by the astonishing celerity with which he moved troops.

Lord Derby had no other thought than to attack immediately. The town rang with trumpet blasts, the rolling of drums and the clattering of spirited horses. Simon made time to seek Lord Widdrington's chaplain and found his lordship kneeling in the narrow passage, waiting his turn, while stout Sir Thomas Tyldesley and some lads of his array were going to confession.

Lord Derby divided his cavalry into two troops, and decided to command the van himself and to confide the rear to Tyldesley.

Simon never forgot that day. The glorious charge into Wigan Lane, the prompt conviction that they were heavily outnumbered, the heat, the din, the dust—the horrible confusion, the screams of dying men and horses! He set his teeth hard, with the firm determination to stick close behind Lord Derby and his friend Widdrington, and to keep his horse under him. The air was thick with bullets—Lord Derby himself received thirteen upon his breastplate. Simon saw his horse killed under him, and sprang down in time to extricate his friend, who had a fearful gash on the brow. Moreau struggled up with the second horse, and in a second, James was in the saddle, dashing away the blood which streamed down his face and cheering on his men.

"Get my second horse, Paul," shouted Simon.

And then the fierce struggle began again. Lord Derby

seemed to bear a charmed life; another horse was killed under him, and he was again remounted with Simon's aid. Just as they at length fought their way out of the dreadful confines of the lane, Lord Widdrington fell, covered with wounds and instantly expired. Lord Derby's third horse was shot, and he caught at the bridle of his friend's charger.

"Good-by, brave Will! Come on, lads! Have at 'em!"

They gathered behind him and charged again—only half the original force emerging into the fields of trampled corn. But even though they passed clean through Colonel Lilburne's cavalry, it was clear at the end of the second hour's hot fighting, that the Parliamentarians were to win the day.

"We must get back to town," ordered Derby; "and re-join the infantry!"

And turning, they charged back. But Lilburne's foot had now come up and lined the road and the banks of the lane from whence they rained down a hail of musket balls. The royalist infantry, which had marched out, were decimated; gallant Sir Thomas Tyldesley lay dead upon the field with four more commanders. By evening the town was in the hands of the enemy.

In a few short hours Lord Derby had lost all. His troops were scattered, and he himself, exhausted with loss of blood, was obliged to take refuge in a friend's house, and have his wounds dressed in secret. Of all his train there remained only Simon and his faithful valet, Paul Moreau. His situation was precarious in the extreme, for long since a price had been set upon his head.

Simon felt stiff and sore all over. He was unwounded, but had sustained many stout blows from which his head was still ringing.

"What are we to do now, my lord?" he inquired, as

he bathed the long, jagged cut down his friend's forearm.

"The good folk of the house must furnish some disguise," returned Derby, "and we will forthwith ride on to the King."

"You will risk a night's rest, surely?"

"Nay, not an hour," returned the other feverishly. "We must on to the King. Every moment we linger here brings danger on the friends who harbor us. And the new levies, Simon, how shall we warn them?"

Simon undertook to find some stout lads who could be trusted to take word to the broken regiments and the bands of recruits, bidding them to avoid Wigan and hurry on to join the King's forces at Worcester.

Wigan was loyal though overawed by the squadrons of cavalry which patrolled the streets. Friendly shopkeepers provided civilian clothes and guided the fugitives out of the town.

It was a melancholy party enough which rode away, weary in every limb. Friendly Lancashire was left behind. The broad flat plain of Cheshire, where sympathies were about equally divided, lay before them. Worcester and the young King were far ahead, and the wild adventure on which he had penetrated into England was of doubtful issue. Sometimes it seemed to Simon that the right *must* triumph, sometimes that all would go down in blood and disaster.

"I would I had died at Bolton Breach," murmured Lord Derby, after some hours of rough travel with Simon leading his horse.

"You could do no more—you were heavily outnumbered, my lord! No one could have been a more gallant commander!"

Derby insisted on pressing on, only pausing for a few hours' rest at houses of undoubted loyalty. He was ex-

hausted with fatigue and loss of blood, yet Simon had much difficulty in persuading him to lie for a day at Mr. Watson's in Shropshire, while he himself rode about the country and endeavored to find out where the King's adherents were gathering.

He had the good fortune to meet with one Mr. Ralph Sneyd of Keel, whom he had often seen in his lordship's company in happier times; they were indeed close personal friends.

"My lord is in the utmost danger here," said Simon. "I would we could find some secluded house where he could lie for a day or two. Riding makes the wound break forth afresh, and he has lost a great quantity of blood."

"My poor house is in the hands of the rebels," returned Ralph, "else how gladly I would have received him."

"Once in my boyhood I traveled this way," said Simon thoughtfully. "And a sturdy yeoman gave us shelter for the night. He'll be true to the King, I warrant. Now what was the name? Pender—no Penderel."

"The Penderels! That is a good thought, young man! There are six brothers of that family, and each one more loyal than the other!"

"They were but plain folk though," said Simon anxiously, "and I would my lord could have a little comfort and care."

"I have it! I will myself ride with you, and we will conduct our good friends to Boscobel, the house of Master Giffard. He is with the Army, I believe; but one of the Penderels and his wife are servants there—they will receive us gladly."

The move was accomplished that very night. Ralph Sneyd went ahead to prepare for Lord Derby's reception, leaving his serving-man to act as guide. They dared

not travel till after dusk, and it was gray dawn when the groom slid from his horse to knock at the door of the old stone manor. Simon's first care was to assist Lord Derby to bed, to dress his wound and administer the cordial prepared by buxom Mrs. Penderel. It was not until he had seen him fall asleep that Bradshaigh tiptoed out of the room, and went down to the breakfast parlor where Master Sneyd was attacking a copious repast. Mistress Penderel was heartbroken that she had not had time to roast a fowl. There was a round of beef, however, and a pig's cheek, and a dish of smoking rashers, not to speak of a pasty of vast dimensions which Mistress Sally had brought out of her store. It was well seasoned with brandy, and she had intended to keep it until the return of her master, but she well knew that all she could do was too little for the entertainment of such honored guests.

When Penderel presently drew near with a foaming jug of home-brewed ale, Simon recalled himself to his memory.

The serving-man looked long and hard at Simon, then, apparently satisfied with his scrutiny, he bent over and whispered as he poured the beer:

"There is a gentleman upstairs now!"

"What! A priest in the house!" exclaimed Simon joyfully. "That is indeed good hearing."

"Yes. Good Father Huddleston passes as the young gentlemen's tutor. There are three lads under his guidance here, but they are not yet astir. And that is why my master will have no one in the house but myself and the missus. Wenches will talk, and a chance word might cost the good Father his head. But I'll take you up in private as soon as the priest is astir."

So while Lord Derby and Master Sneyd slept off the fatigues of the journey, Simon, heavy-eyed and

sleepy, passed up a spiral stair and was introduced into that narrow, low-ceiled set of attic chambers which was to become famous in history.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE mellow rays of sunlight were striking aslant on the well-polished, beveled panels which covered the walls of the room where Simon slept for a few hours. It was now late afternoon. He had drawn back all the bed-curtains as was his habit, and lying on his back with his hands clasped under his head he could look out of the open lattice without raising himself.

He could see the clipped peacocks surmounting the yew hedge, the topmost blossoms of the roses in the garden it enclosed, and beyond, the rising ground of the park, set with old lichened thorns and tall elms, heavy in their midsummer foliage. Sheep clustered together in the shade, and cattle were passing, single file with switching tails, on their way to cool themselves in the river. The home coverts surrounded the park except at the brink of the hill, where there was a hint of yellowing corn fields. Somewhere out of sight a fountain plashed, and pigeons were cooing on the hot stone tiles of the stable roofs. A peaceful English scene this! Yet even here, surrounded by honest tenants and friendly neighbors, Master Giffard went in terror of his life; and only by constant absences from home was he able to keep his house and life itself in precarious security.

Saturday passed peacefully enough; and on Sunday, Bradshaigh heard Mass with the Penderels and the three boy scholars in the sunny attic room. Simon had scarcely fallen asleep that night when he was roused by

William Penderel's hand upon his shoulder. He sat up, blinking at the home-made candle set upon the table.

"I thought it best to disturb you, young sir, for my brother has just brought in news." He dropped his voice mysteriously. "The King himself is at Gatacre Park, not nine miles distant. 'Tis Master Humphrey Elliot's house."

The King himself! Simon decided that Lord Derby must be informed immediately and dressing quickly, he went to his room. Derby was not asleep; he was sitting up in bed, propped against his pillows, with his pocket psalter in his hand. When Simon presented himself he made a sign for silence until he had read to the end of the page.

"Now," he said, closing the book at last, "what tidings?"

"My lord!" cried Bradshaigh breathlessly, "we are close to the King."

At that moment the memory of the swarthy, teasing, spoiled boy at Whitehall was swept from his mind. Young King Charles, the son of a murdered father—the gallant youth who trusted his life unflinchingly to a handful of his faithful subjects, seemed altogether another being, and one whom he would gladly die for. Was he not the hope of England, the champion of the oppressed, a young man of his own age, who had come sailing from overseas to recapture his Kingdom?

"Help me to rise, Simon," cried James, in tones subdued by a kindred emotion. "My King! My sainted Master's son! I must not waste an hour until I kiss his hand!"

The French valet was presently laboring in an agony of haste, altering the straps of an old breastplate of Master Giffard's, knotting a white scarf across it, and replacing in the borrowed beaver a worn feather by one newly curled. When all was finished, my lord drew out

his sparkling Order, and with awkward movements of his wounded arm, adjusted it upon his breast.

"Oh, my lord—" began Simon dubiously.

"Give me the cloak!" interrupted Derby. "That will cover it while we ride. My sword, Simon! Nay, I will not stoop to disguise. I ride armed, as an Earl should, to meet my King."

There was a moon, the night was still and peaceful, and while Simon stood waiting with the horses before the shallow, curved steps leading to the hall door, he was conscious of woodland fragrances of moss and fern, mingling with the sweet breath from Mistress Giffard's lavender hedges.

Lord Derby came out presently, walking heavily and leaning upon Moreau's arm. Mistress Penderel followed, bearing a stirrup cup, and loudly lamenting his lordship's departure with his wounds yet green. The Penderel brothers with their plump, farm cobs, were prepared to act as escort.

The little party reached their destination soon after one o'clock. Richard Penderel rode ahead to warn the sentries to whom he was known, but Derby murmured to Simon as they passed through the park, that his Majesty seemed but slenderly guarded. Late as it was there were lights burning in one of the lower rooms, and as they went past, someone moved the curtain, and flung open a window. Simon had a sudden vision of the interior, gleaming out in sharp contrast to the soft dimness of the night.

Innumerable fluttering candles flared upon the long oak dining table at one end of which four men sat at cards. One glanced up, it seemed to Simon that their eyes met. He was a tall man, with a dark, swarthy face and tufted eyebrows—a young face which had yet no youthful freshness, a humorous, cruel, careless face with

its hooked nose and curling lip. The man was dressed in white, and held a wine glass in one hand.

Simon stifled an exclamation. Lord Derby had seen nothing and when a few moments later, they were ushered into the very room, the King rose courteously to greet them. He stood, with the gracious dignity which sat so well upon him, beside a table loaded with maps and plans. No cards were to be seen and no wine, and though his Majesty's face was hotly flushed, his enunciation was clear, and his gait perfectly steady as he advanced a few paces to greet his well-beloved cousin.

Lord Derby had flung aside his cloak and hastened forward, the Order blazing at his breast, to throw himself at the feet of his King.

Charles II thought he had out-distanced Cromwell, but once again the terrible puritan commander was to triumph by the speed with which he was able to move large numbers of perfectly disciplined troops. The Cavaliers seemed incapable of learning that dash and personal courage is no match for discipline and generalship, though it may gain a momentary advantage. The royal army was loosely encamped, the roads were full of stragglers and small bodies of recruits wandering about in search of the King's headquarters. There was no General on Charles' staff who had had any experience in handling masses of troops—there was no strategist. The King had about him many gallant gentlemen who ruined their fortunes and lost their lives for his sake. None of them felt responsible for more than their own contingent of men, none of them were clearly aware what the others were doing.

On September the third, Cromwell came up with the young King who instantly gave battle. By evening the same day, the royal forces were utterly shattered; all Charles' high hopes were fallen; many of his best sup-

porters dead, and he himself a fugitive, not knowing where to lay his head.

Through all the varying fortunes of battle, Lord Derby had never lost sight of his sovereign. And now as they fled from the field, his sweating gray horse kept in close proximity to the King's black charger. Simon followed, his horse had been killed, and he himself was lamed by a sword-thrust through the thigh, and was riding a horse which he had caught running loose. His wound was not serious but exceedingly painful; he had bound it up roughly with his scarf.

"We are done—we must run like rats!" cried the King over his shoulder, spurring his exhausted steed. "Come on—I have no mind to be captured by that canaille!"

He had been in the forefront of the fighting all day, no one could have shown greater bravery, but now he was poignantly aware of his danger.

"Halt, my lord, we must think what to do!" cried Simon.

The horsemen drew rein in the shelter of a group of trees, and took stock of each other. The King was pale, his face all streaked with dust and perspiration, his deep-set black eyes darted apprehensive glances in every direction, his thin, nervous hand played feverishly with the rein.

"I think, my good friends, we are too few to give battle and too many for safety," he observed. "We had best split up into two parties. Come! I am in your hands, gentlemen. What am I to do?"

"My lord," whispered Simon, "here is Colonel Giffard, under whose roof we sheltered at Boscobel. Do you return with him thither. You will be safe there, my dear lord."

"The King's life is at stake, Simon," returned Derby rebukingly. He turned in his saddle and took off his tat-

tered beaver with a ceremonious bow as if they had all the time in the world.

"Your servant, Colonel Giffard. I pray you excuse me that I ——"

"Lord Derby," interrupted the King, "I cannot wait here—what are we to do?"

"I humbly suggest, Sire, that you should repair to the house of my benefactor, Colonel Giffard. Boscobel lies deep in the woods and is most solitary."

"I have another house nearer here," exclaimed Giffard. "Whiteladies is but twenty miles off; my cousin, Mistress Cotton, resides there. But your Majesty is right—we had best move in smaller parties."

"Buckingham and Wilmot stay with me," ordered Charles. "My Lord Derby, we count upon your company. Colonel Roscarrock, you too had best stay with us."

"With your consent, Sire, Lauderdale and I will endeavor to rejoin Leslie's horse," said Lord Talbot.

"You had best lie for the night in some honest house and rest your horses," cried Giffard. "Here is John Penderel who will guide you. Shall I lead on, my Liege?"

"Aye, do!" returned Charles gloomily.

"And you, Simon? Colonel Giffard, my young friend here is sore struck," said Derby. "Can you find some place where he can take refuge and be tended?"

"No, no, my lord! I follow you!" cried Simon impetuously. "I'll not leave you and the King till I see you safe at Boscobel. 'Tis but a flesh wound."

He straightened himself in the saddle and quickened his horse's pace, though every movement sent darts of fiery pain from heel to groin. Lord Derby kept a watchful eye upon him, torn between his allegiance to his King and his affection for his young friend.

The dust of the recent battle hung like a cloud between the fugitives and the gray old town, five or six miles

away. The Cathedral tower looked out above it, set in a little green oasis of tall elms. The river Severn gleamed silvery, winding between the corn fields and the base of the hill on which Worcester is built.

"I do not like being hemmed in by the river," said Buckingham. "The West country was ever for the King. If we can gather the Scotch troops again ——"

The King interrupted with a French oath: "Gather them again—'twould be easier to gather thistle seed scattered in the wind! I am broke, *mes amis*—*il n'y a plus de roi!*"

"As long as you live, Sire, we have our King!" cried Derby, his voice vibrating with fervor.

Charles looked round with raillery in his eyes, but he thought better of it, and choked back the mocking words which rose all too easily to his lips. Derby was not one of his intimates; one glance at the white face, framed in masses of tangled hair, the eyes, hollowed with exhaustion, flaming with feverish exaltation, was enough for the quick-witted Stuart. He must be regal even in defeat and flight. With a gesture at once frank and dignified, he extended his long, bony hand: it was stained with powder and dust, but Derby kissed it devoutly.

In the small hours of the morning, Whiteladies was reached and the King refreshed with food and wine.

Simon hobbled upstairs and beckoned Lord Derby into the passage.

"Two of the gallant Penderel brothers are here," he said, "and they bring sore news. The rebels are setting guards at all the bridges. His Majesty must endeavor to cross the river by one of the fords lower down no later than to-morrow."

"And meanwhile he must be hid at Boscobel," returned Derby. "I will leave him there, for I know I am a marked man." He pronounced the last words with a

certain melancholy pride, adding presently: "Ah, Simon, if we were but in the blessed Isle of Man!"

"Alas, my lord, Cromwell and his victorious army lie between us and it!" said Simon. "But what think you, sir? Would it not be best for his Majesty to trust himself to the care of the Penderels? They are honest to a man, good Catholics every one, and there are six of them, all living hereabout. The King would be safer with them than in any of the noble houses where he will certainly be sought for."

Lord Derby hesitated, but the practical good sense of the suggestion carried the day. "I will go speak of it to his Majesty," he said, and returned to the little white-paneled parlor, where the King still sat, half asleep over his wine.

A few moments later Simon was ordered to call Richard and William Penderel. The yeomen had no idea of the exalted quality of the refugees, and merely considered them as fellow officers of the great Lord Derby. Some loyal woodcutters had just brought news that Cromwell's cavalry was scouring the country in strong parties, and Whiteladies might be approached at any moment.

Simon hobbled upstairs with his friends, led them past Lord Wilmot who guarded the first door, through the little antechamber to the inner parlor.

They stood shy and square-shouldered gazing at the company, when Lord Derby came forward, and, addressing William as his faithful protector, led him forward by the hand.

"This is the King," he said simply, when they stood before the tall, raw-boned, ugly boy. "Thou must take care of him and preserve him as thou didst me."

Half an hour later Charles Stuart, with his hair cropped, disguised as a day laborer and accompanied only by the Penderels, left the house by a back door.

CHAPTER XXV

PIGEONS were cooing on the roof, for the sun had gleamed out in the intervals of two rain storms. The air was all misty with golden dust, and Simon stared about him for some moments before he realized where he was. This was evidently the haymow at Whiteladies. He was lying on billows of soft meadow hay, wrapped in a blanket, his wound neatly dressed with the finest of linen. Stirring cautiously, the young man peered out through the half-closed, wooden shutter. The yard was empty, still steaming from the recent downpour—the stable doors stood wide: there was no sound of clattering hoof, or jingle of headstall, and Simon had an instant impression that every box was empty. As he sank back in consternation, the ladder from the barn below creaked under carefully quiet footsteps, and presently John Penderel's shrewd, sunburnt face rose over the floor level. He began some remark about breakfast in a prudent whisper, and would have retreated had not Simon beckoned imperatively.

"Have they gone?" he asked breathlessly. Penderel climbed up the mound of hay.

"*He* is in the wood," he murmured. "We moved you here last night, but you scarce stirred, thanks to Mistress Cotton's cordial. The rebels are riding all the country in strong parties ——"

"But Lord Derby! Where is my lord?" interrupted Simon, feverishly thrusting his feet into the pair of countryman's leather breeches which had been laid near him.

"He rode off before it was light," returned John. "All the gentlemen made off, for fear their presence should endanger ——"

"Hush!" cried Simon.

They both paused a moment, listening with all their ears.

"I must after my lord," said Simon then, groaning involuntarily as he tried to rise. "He was not fit to ride, John. He had fever on him."

"Aye, indeed, his head lolled on his breast, he scarce knew what he was about," agreed Penderel. "My Lord Wilmot is hid in a house some four miles away, and his horses are in the barn. Maybe you could join him? We tried to cross Severn, but every bridge and ford is watched."

"Get me some food and tell me which way Lord Derby went. Good John—hasten, find my horse!"

"I'll go with you myself as far as Wolverhampton to see if I can find means to get my Lord Wilmot away," said John. "You would be advised to wait awhile, young Master, and travel with him."

But Simon was in no mood to accept any such counsel. Lord Derby, his beloved friend, had ridden away, wounded, and was facing danger, perhaps death.

"I must be with him," repeated Simon, clenching his teeth as he dragged his wounded leg down the short ladder and across the yard. His head ached with fever and weariness, and the idea was almost an obsession. Lord Derby had taken his father's place, and he loved him almost as well.

An hour later Simon was plodding steadily northward along the track which he had ridden in those bygone years with such anxious thoughts of his father. Fragments of John's talk kept recurring to his mind—how royalist soldiers were hiding in the fields, afraid even to beg for food, chewing pea-straw to stay the pangs of hunger, that the country folk would rise no more for the King, they were tired of the long

struggle; how Lord Derby had scarce broken his fast that morning.

He pressed on, gathering news as he advanced.

Here was Newport at last—the goal of forty-five aching miles. The little town was empty and seemed asleep; not a soul was stirring in the street, yet when Simon tapped at a house door, faces peered from the narrow mullion windows all around the deserted market square.

Aye, they told him, Lord Derby had passed that way with a score of stragglers but Lilburne's men were ahead, barring the road North. Leslie had shown a clean pair of heels and slipped through the rebel forces in the night.

Simon thanked them and rode on. The very name of Lilburne, the victor of Wigan Lane, made his heart sink. What then of Lord Derby, whose mind easily fell a prey to gloomy forebodings?

If only it had not been Lilburne!

He fell to prayer as he pressed his horse forward heedlessly through the harvest fields where other horses had gone before him. Mind and body alike were racked with pain, so numbed indeed that the scene upon which he looked down presently from the rising ground, seemed almost like a dream.

A cloud of dust on the horizon betokened that heavy bodies of troops were pressing up from the west, and here below him, crossing the pastures, came a strong force of rebel cavalry. They paused, and then moved on hesitatingly as though uncertain of their direction. Simon almost unconsciously wary, moved round so as to keep a little thicket of hazels between him and the soldiers. Then even as he watched, a second group emerged from the shadow of the trees. Like magic the rebel horsemen had sprung into line. Simon spurred his horse with a choked cry, for he had recognized the long

curls, the broad shoulders of the foremost figure among the cavaliers.

It was mad—mad to attempt such an unequal battle! But even as he put his horse to the fence, a word echoed up from below—one word which pierced his heart like a knife and caused him to check his horse so suddenly, that the tired animal nearly came to the ground.

“Quarter!” cried the leader of the smaller group.

There was a sudden lowering of weapons and the two groups merged.

Simon turned his horse back into the coppice, slid from its back and threw himself face-down upon the soaking grass. Life was too bitter! The King had fled, and Derby surrendered! Oh, then indeed the royal cause was at end in England!

Captain Edge, of Lilburne’s, rode to Chester in triumph with an immense escort surrounding his illustrious prisoners. A young man followed unnoticed, on a little ragged pony—he was very fair and walked lame.

The horse was exchanged for a skiff in due course, and Simon passed under the water-gate at Chester even as the townsfolk lined the walls in mournful silence to see their own Earl ride through the East gate, a prisoner.

Two of his own servants petitioned leave to wait on him: they might not have obtained it, had not a heavy purse changed hands. One was his lordship’s French valet, the other a groom, lamed by the kick of a horse, or so ’twas said. They brought Lord Derby’s valise between them, and after it had been thoroughly searched, he was allowed the use of it. And Moreau, footsore and in rags, brought with him a packet of his master’s favorite chocolate.

The sentry at the door was startled by Lord Derby’s cry at the appearance of his servants. He peered through the grating in the door, ready to report anything un-

usual. But the prisoner was reading on his bed, and the two men were quietly going about their duties.

Under the shadow of night, in disguise, by devious paths and secret ways, Lord Derby's friends hastened to Chester.

His capture was hailed by the Covenanters with a veritable howl of triumph. Their vindictive hatred of him was second only to their hatred of Charles I—a hate which his death had intensified. The whole world was made aware that "the great Earl" had fallen into the hands of his enemies. They feared almost as much as they hated him, and extra troops were hurried from all parts to guard the broken-hearted prisoner.

He asked to be allowed to see his daughters, but he was refused the indulgence unless he could obtain special permission from Whitehall. He wrote to his wife, but his letter was intercepted.

Lord Lauderdale was parted from him and sent to the Tower, and, though there were ominous rumors, no one could predict what Lord Derby's fate was likely to be.

CHAPTER XXVI

LORD STRANGE arrived in the town within ten days of his father's capture. He did not come in menial disguise as Simon had done, but armed with a special pass, a letter of introduction to the Governor of Chester Castle, and accompanied by his wife in a coach and four.

Derby forebore to reproach this disobedient son, yet Charles' arrival did little to alleviate his depression. The

young man showed him much affection but he did not acknowledge his fault, and he came under the ægis of the rebel government. .

"Your talk is all of surrender, Charles," said the elder man sadly enough. "Have I not surrendered? Did I not stoop to ask for quarter? In truth, I was so weary I scarce knew what was passing."

"Yes, sir, you were right—a thousand times right to do so," cried Charles eagerly. "But to stop now is greater danger still. You must realize that there is only one government in England now—only one power—Cromwell's."

"They have not captured the King, though," returned Derby, in a whisper. "There is no fresh news of him, my son?"

"No. It is said he is still lurking somewhere in England," returned Charles indifferently. "But, father, *you* must make submission; you must surrender the island, or you are lost—we are all lost."

Derby started violently, and turned his eyes, full of reproach, upon his son. He was about to speak bitterly, but controlled himself with a visible effort.

Bradshaigh subsequently accompanied Lord Strange through the narrow, crowded streets over which booths were built out, making long, overhanging galleries, to his lodging.

The old timbered dwelling in Watergate Street, which had been the Stanley's residence when in Chester, from time immemorial, had been sequestrated like the rest of of their property. "The Stanley Palace" it was still called, for though the low ceiled rooms were small and few enough, it had been built on the feudal model, with baronial hall and ladies' bower.

Charles was now staying at a tavern in Bridge Street which his wife considered vastly beneath her new position. It was impossible as well as dangerous to talk out

of doors, as Simon, in his character of groom, was obliged to walk a pace or two behind Lord Strange. Then when at last the door was locked upon the outer world, Charles must needs go to greet the bride from whom he had been separated for an hour, and dallied so long, that Simon began to stride impatiently about the little parlor.

As he reflected, his anxiety grew more and more acute. When at last Charles returned, simpering fatuously, he turned a lowering countenance upon him.

"We are wasting too much time! Have you heard this rumor of a court martial? Should you not see a lawyer on my lord's behalf?" he exclaimed.

"Why, Simon, you cannot seriously think my father is in any personal danger? Martial law is most explicit on the point," returned Charles in a surprised tone. "All that is necessary is that he should make a formal surrender of the Isle of Man and that my mother should retire to Knowsley. It should have been done long ago—you know well that residence there has cost him a fortune."

Bradshaigh colored violently. "Are you going to think of money, sir, when your father's life is at stake?" he asked indignantly.

"But it is not," replied Charles impatiently. "Let him make an act of submission. It will not do to stand upon dignity now—we must e'en save what we can out of the mess. As for me, I have taken on fresh responsibilities, and must needs think of them."

A sudden terror struck into Simon's heart, overmastering the wrath there.

"Charles," he said earnestly, "remember how you loved him as a child! Remember he is your father—and such a kind, loving father too! Forget your temporary estrangement, but for God's sake make no mistake about his peril! You do not know these rebels."

"Tut, Simon, you are all too exalted, I think," cried Strange. "The Lord General has won—he is supreme—he has nothing more to fear. Besides, even if it should come to a trial, a peer must be tried by his peers ——"

Simon interrupted with a mocking laugh.

"Show me the peers of the King of England! I tell you if Cromwell wants your father's blood, he will spill it, and shroud his action in some devilish parade of legality. This is no time to play the bridegroom—you are his son ——" He broke off panting.

Charles turned away, looking mightily offended.

"I am, as you say, his son," he observed coldly. "And it is for me to decide in council with my father what is best to be done."

Simon looked at him, his eyes blazing under frowning brows.

"I have earned my right to speak then!" he cried vehemently. "I followed him while you were dallying with ladies—aye, and hobnobbing with the rebels, if rumor speaks true. Cannot you see that the more friendly *you* are with the puritans, the more they desire your father's death?"

Charles wheeled round, startled and dismayed.

"You have shown that you will not risk life or fortune for the King—do you think Cromwell fears *you*? And now you will not raise a finger to try to save your father!"

"How dare you say so!" gasped Strange. The idea was indeed quite new to him, and it filled him with horror. "What—what do you want me to do?" he added in a voice which shook with emotion.

"See a lawyer—try and find out if they are determined on a court martial; and have horses relayed from here to London in case you have to try a plea with Cromwell himself. And visit your sisters—the poor

maidens may be short of all necessities, for all you know—they were nearly starving in Liverpool.”

Charles listened with a lengthening face.

“And get money,” concluded Simon, snatching up his hat. “You must have money by you. They have sent Lauderdale to the Tower, and ’tis mighty ominous that my lord did not accompany him. I pray you act at once.”

“I am like to have a merry honeymoon in faith,” said Charles bitterly.

“Indeed, it was a pretty moment to choose for marriage!” retorted Simon.

As the two men glared at each other, the soft twang of a lute fell upon their ears, and they noticed that the door into the adjoining room was ajar.

“Well, what is done is done,” said Bradshaigh with a sigh. “I pray you forgive my impatience. I love my lord dearly.”

Charles hesitated. “We never liked each other, you and I,” he said at length, “but we must stick together now—for his sake.”

“Aye,” returned Simon. Not one word more could he utter, and with an abrupt little bow, he left the room.

Lord Derby was writing when he was readmitted to the cell. He looked pale and worn, but less agitated than in the morning:

“Charles showed me a great deal of affection,” he said with satisfaction. “He has provided very badly for himself, and circumstanced as I am now I can do little to amend it. But I think he truly loves me.”

“Yes, indeed, he is greatly distressed at your plight,” returned Simon.

Derby smiled.

“It comforts me greatly. Charles has been much misrepresented—he is true to me. If it is God’s will, I can

die in peace with all men." He sighed heavily. "But I am troubled and sick at heart."

"Nay, my lord. God is good—God is watching over us," murmured Simon.

"Ah, lad, you know not what it is to wander in the wilderness—to seek the Lord like Magdalen with none to guide."

"Jesus said 'I am the Way,'" answered Simon. "He told His Church to teach all nations, He promised to be with it always. Those who seek Him must inquire for the Church which offers daily sacrifice in every part of the world, as is foretold in the Scriptures: 'And in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a clean oblation: for My name is great among the gentiles.'"

"But Simon, I have told you continually the sacrifice we offer is that of a contrite heart and an afflicted spirit——"

"Nay, my lord, forgive me—that is not a true sacrifice. A sacrifice is an offering made to God alone—a clean oblation—and how can any of us miserable sinners claim a perfectly pure unspotted heart?"

"God does not demand the impossible, Simon. Under the old law He accepted the blood of lambs and heifers."

"That was but a symbol of the sacrifice of the New Law by which Christ redeemed the world. See, my lord!" Eagerly he pulled a little crucifix from his pocket. "God, offended by sin, could only be appeased by a sacrifice equally great. Christ died for us: every day in the Mass, in every part of the world, He offers Himself for us again; He repeats the sacrifice of the Cross; He is a Priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech—offering His adorable Body and Blood to the Father under the outward signs of bread and wine."

"But, Simon, 'twere blasphemy to deem it necessary.

The sacrifice of Calvary was amply sufficient to redeem the whole world."

"Aye, my lord, more than sufficient. One thought of God had been sufficient; but He willed otherwise. He loved us, promising 'I will be with you always, I will not leave you orphans, I go and I come unto you.' Did He not speak plainly: 'This is my Body, this is my Blood.' And again: 'My flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, abideth in me and I in him.'"

"He loved us," repeated Derby, and stretching out his hand, he took the cross and gazed at it.

"Your Church, my lord, calls that crucifix idolatrous, and condemns me to banishment if I am found with it in my possession. Look at His pierced hands stretched out to embrace all sinners! He offers us bread from heaven, and man turns aside with contempt, calling it blasphemy."

"The words are not meant to be interpreted literally," said Derby.

"Then there is no sense in Saint Paul's rebuke to those who 'eat and drink judgment to themselves, not discerning the Body of the Lord.'"

"Oh, hush, Simon! Enough, enough—leave me in peace, my convictions are settled."

"I leave you then in a Church which cannot 'teach all nations,' for her language is only understood in one small island—a Church which has no sacrifice, though God has demanded sacrifice from the first beginnings of time; a Church which is not One, for since she believes in private judgment each man—learned or unlearned—interprets God's word according to his own sweet will! A Church which has no liturgy nor history, for the first fifteen centuries of Christianity! My dear, dear lord, you are worthy of better things!"

"If I had been baptized a Catholic, I believe I should

have been a faithful one; but since God did not so will it, I will not abandon the Church of my baptism," returned Derby.

"The Jews could have pleaded the same excuse for clinging to the Old Law," urged Simon. "Indeed they did so. Yet how terrible is Our Lord's denunciation of the Pharisees!"

Lord Derby shuddered. An expression of anguish came into his face.

"Only look at the cross, my lord," went on Simon. "Is not all explained by His love for us? 'I thirst,' He cried in His anguish! We cannot understand—we can only believe. All is explained by the divine folly of His boundless love for sinners. You have found Him, my lord—hold Him, do not let Him go."

His voice, vibrating with emotion, died away. Lord Derby sank upon his knees, the little crucifix between his fingers was wet with his tears.

CHAPTER XXVII

IT SOON became known that Lord Derby was to be tried for his life. By the martial law of the time, a person who surrendered on quarter being given by a field officer, lapsed from his army rank to that of a private citizen, and could not therefore legally be subjected to a court-martial.

"No one could be liable to court-martial who had been granted quarter," said the friends of the Cavaliers, visiting their imprisoned comrades. But a near relative of Colonel John Bradshaw, the president of the Council, wrote cynically to a partisan before the trial:

"The Earl of Derby is to be condemned at Chester and executed at Bolton."

James himself had little hope.

"Cromwell knows me for his chief enemy," he told Simon. "He means me to die, it matters not on what cause. Yet for the sake of others and of my poor, little children, I will put up the best defense I can."

"My lord, you should apply for leave to have Counsel, and to know on what counts you are to be arraigned," cried Simon, his face puckered with anxiety.

"I have already done so thrice," said Derby. "But they return me no answer. Only that I am to prepare to answer questions about the sequestration of my estates. It seems some of the tenants have raised legal difficulties. It makes me laugh," he continued with a mirthless smile, "that I should be forced to furnish grounds for the stripping of my own fortunes."

"My lord, you must not give your parole under any circumstances," he burst out suddenly.

"Why, lad, are you thinking of ——"

Simon made an abrupt gesture of warning. Who knew what spyholes there might be in these old red sandstone walls, besides the little grating in the door?

Parliament, instructed by the Lord General, decreed that Lord Derby should be accused under an Act passed by them on August 12th, a few weeks previously. The Act—of which it was extremely unlikely that the prisoner could have had any knowledge—prohibited correspondence with "Charles Stuart or his party" under pain of high treason against the Commonwealth of England.

Cromwell signed the commission for the court-martial and sent it, accompanied by a letter of instructions, to Colonel Dukinfield, the governor of Chester.

"Sir," he wrote, "the Lord General has renewed your commission for a court-martial which we send you enclosed, and also the orders of Parliament concerning

some to begin withal, to be made examples of justice, among which you will see the Earl of Derby. . . .”

In order that the public might be excluded from the trial, a small room in the Castle was fitted up for the purpose; everything was done as cheaply as possible, partly in order to rob the occasion of all pomp and dignity and partly that it might be hurried on. The prisoner was not even allowed leisure to meditate upon his own case; during two days before the trial he was obliged to answer a harassing series of questions concerning his sequestered property.

Derby had been described as the “archenemy of the Commonwealth;” and though Cromwell had determined that he should be an “example of justice,” he was anxious at the same time to diminish his personal importance. The men selected to sit upon the court martial, were of no particular standing as has been said; they had their orders and were prepared to obey them, quite regardless of precedent or evidence. Indeed none of them had the slightest knowledge of the technicalities of martial law. It is significant that there was not one Lancashireman among them, and that the whole twenty were officers of sequestration, or Parliament Committee men.

On September the 29th, Colonel Mackworth of Shrewsbury, vice-chamberlain of Chester and president of the Council, proclaimed the Court, and called the prisoner to the Bar. Derby was led under a strong guard from the further end of the Castle. He looked about him as he entered, but saw no friendly face. All were strangers to him, except the Governor of the jail, Captain Edge, to whom he had surrendered, and the two sequestrators who had made themselves so troublesome to him.

The Act of August 12th was read, followed by the charges against the prisoner. He made a formal demand for counsel and was remanded. After his removal, the

Court discussed the question. It was finally decided that Lord Derby should have no counsel to plead for him in open court, but should he press for legal advice in private, the "privilege" might be granted, but on condition that he should be attended only by such counsel as the Court should appoint, and that the prisoner should limit his inquiries to the Act of August 12th.

Mr. Zanchy, of Chester, was summoned to him. A clerk waited upon the lawyer and showed him a copy of the Articles of impeachment. He was commanded to read them through, but was not permitted to study or copy them, nor even to discuss them with the prisoner.

On being admitted to Lord Derby's presence he was forbidden to mention anything except the Act of August 12th. Two commissioners remained present during the whole interview to insure that Cromwell's bidding should be carried out.

"This is strange justice, Colonel Dukinfield," said Derby. "I am to answer for my life at nine o'clock to-morrow, and I scarcely yet know of what I am accused. Surely I may see a copy of the charges?"

"I have my orders, my lord," returned the Governor.

"You have also a conscience, sir," retorted the prisoner. "Well, Mr. Zanchy, I see you must leave me. I confess I am still in the dark. I have never heard of this Act of which you speak."

Simon was to pass the night in the little antechamber, stretched on a straw mattress laid across the inner door. When the Governor and his satellites had departed, bearing the lawyer with them, Derby withdrew into his bedroom where Simon had kindled a wood fire. He undressed slowly, and then donning his furred bed-gown, sat down, stretching his hands to the blaze.

"I shall never see my lady again," he murmured, "nor my poor Moll, my poor little boys, who wept so sorely at parting with me! Simon, I had been happy had I

found one at Worcester fight to strike me dead. Yet the Lord's will be done! Remember, I accept His will—I accept it.”

It was raining next day, the long, low room, equipped for the Court, was dark and dismal and uncomfortably crowded; drops streamed down the casements and dripped rhythmically from the eaves.

The Marshal escorted Lord Derby to the Bar. He stood there pale and listless, the heavy locks of brown hair streaming over his shoulders, his weary eyes fixed on his hands which were clasped on the wooden rail before him.

Colonel Mackworth read once more Cromwell's commission and proceeded to declaim in loud nasal tones the Act under which the prisoner was charged. His voice gathered gusto as he came to the clause—“and such as by the said council shall suffer, shall also forfeit all his and their lands, goods and other estate, as in case of high treason ——”

“I am no traitor neither!” cried Derby irrepressibly.

His eyes flashed, he started up, shaking back his hair as though it had been a lion's mane. The Commissioners on either side shrank back involuntarily, and the President rose to his feet.

“Sir,” he shouted in a loud, bullying tone, “your words are contemptible. You must be silent during the reading of the Act and your charge.”

Derby looked about him. They seemed as so many wolves ravening for his life. With an effort he controlled his indignation, murmuring to himself as Mackworth's voice thundered on:

“It is nothing to me to be judged by you or by any man's day.”

To the charges he responded very courteously and

briefly. He had, he said, been in the Isle of Man and had never even heard of the Act of August 12th.

The Court then debated how much time should be allowed to the prisoner to plead his defense and before sentence should be pronounced. He was required to reply fully to all the charges on the following morning at nine o'clock.

"'Tis but a dreary comedy, Simon. My death is planned; it is compassed. I do but follow my friend and martyred King," said Derby when he returned to his apartments.

Simon strove to reply, but no words would come. Late that night he knocked at the door of Lord Strange's lodging.

"You must have a petition written out and be ready to ride," he said.

Charles stared as though at an apparition. Simon indeed looked much older, his face was lined and strained, yet there was something singularly dogged in his aspect.

"Petition? Ride?" repeated Charles dully. He gave an unconscious backward glance at the warm, candle-lit parlor behind him. There all was so safe and pleasant; Simon seemed a harsh messenger from a world of terror and of death.

"A petition to be read in the House of Commons," said Bradshaigh, speaking with careful deliberation. "'Twere best to address it to the Speaker, they tell me. Lenthall is his name. You must have it all written out fair, but do not show it to my lord unless the Court refuses to accept his plea of quarter."

"But that will be decided to-morrow!" cried Charles.

"No matter—you have the night before you," said Simon grimly. "Sir Maurice Enslow and his friend are lying at Master Leche's by the Watergate—they will

assist you. And should things go ill here you must ride forthwith to London."

"But, Simon——"

"We have decided not to risk an escape except as the very last resource," added Bradshaigh authoritatively.

"We—who are we?" asked Charles pettishly.

"Your father's faithful friends," returned Simon.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE prisoner stood at his grated window looking out at the angry yellow dawn; the rain clouds above the Welsh hills reflected the lurid gleam. Derby's thoughts flew beyond the plum-colored outlines, across the big mountains to the sea, and away over the sea to that little island which seemed to nestle in the waves. It was to him as the Hy Brasil of the Celts—the island of bliss—the land of desire, which he would reach no more.

The table and the narrow room were littered with torn papers for he had been writing all night; first his reply to the charges against him, which he had spoken in Court that morning, and then letters, written and rewritten, about the surrender of the Isle of Man. Now that England was entirely in Cromwell's hands and the King fled, he had decided that Man also must be abandoned to avoid further bloodshed. The best terms must be obtained, however, in order to safeguard as far as possible his wife and children. Manxmen were loyal, except for the Christian family, a member of which was still immured in the dungeon at Peel Castle.

He had left to the last the letter to Charlotte, which was to seal the fate of little "Ellan Vannin." Now, turning

back to the table, and taking up his pen, he began to write:

“MY DEAREST HEART:—It hath been my sad hap since I left you to have not one comfortable tyding from you, and this must be most sad of all, that what I now write is a mass of many sad things in one.”

[The melancholy story was briefly told, each sentence being first deeply reflected upon, and then written out in the large, sloping hand, without correction or erasure.]

“I thought myself happy to be brought to Chester,” [he continued] “where I might see my two daughters and have means, I doubted not, to send to you; but I fear my coming here may cost me dear, unless Almighty God, in whom I trust, do help me some other way. . . .

“Colonel Dukinfield, Governor of this town, is going, according to his orders from the Parliament and General, to the Isle of Man, where he will make known unto you his business. I have considered your position and my own, and thereupon write you this advice: Take it not as from a prisoner ——”

[He broke off, glancing through the open window: it was set high in the wall and the light was brightening behind the bars; down below two robins were singing, jubilantly vying with each other. The familiar crystalline jet of song spilled upon the air, brought back to the memory a thousand happy mornings, when the children, running in, had clung about his knees!]

“Take it not as from a prisoner”—[the ink had dried upon the page,—] “for though I be never so close,” [he continued,] “my heart is my own, free still as the best.”

[He informed her briefly of his arrangements. How

he had obtained leave for one Captain Baggarly, whom she knew, now a Cavalier prisoner in the town, to bear his letter to her with full instructions as to the surrender of Man.] "I have told him my reasons, and he will tell them to you, which done may save the spilling of blood in that island and maybe of some here, which is dear to you; but of that take no care, neither treat at all for it, for I perceive it will do you more hurt than good.

"Have a care, my dear soul, of yourself, and of my dear Moll, my dear Ned and Billy; as for those here, I give them the best advice I can. . . . My son shows great affection and is gone to London, with exceeding concern and passion for my good; he is changed for the better, I thank God! . . .

"Refer all to the good God, and get the best conditions you can for yourself and our poor friends in Man and those that came over with me; and so trust God and begin the world again, though near to winter. The Lord of heaven bless you and comfort you and my poor children; the Son of God whose Blood was shed to do us good, preserve our lives, that we may meet again on earth, however in heaven, where we shall never be plundered; and so I rest everlastingly.

"Your faithful

"DERBY."

He sealed the letter with his great seal, and then lay down half-dressed as he was, in the hope of a little sleep. No stone had been left unturned; to satisfy his friends and his own conscience he had made every effort for his own life.

The Court Martial had judged him guilty of a breach of the Act of August 12, which condemned as traitors all who held any communication with "Charles Stuart." But all the prisons and many of the churches of Chester

were packed with prisoners who had obviously committed the same offense. The country would not endure a wholesale massacre of prisoners, so some further crime must be urged against Derby. No one could sympathize with a murderer, they decided. And thus, after Derby had been tried and condemned, it was put about that he was responsible for all the blood shed at the storming of Bolton, and in particular for the death of one Captain Booth, who, it was alleged, he had "murderously slain."

Cromwell's resolve that his foe should be executed at Bolton, would give color, it was hoped, to the accusation of murder. It was agreed that Lancashire must be overawed—that Derby must die with a cloud upon his honor.

The prisoner repelled the charge indignantly, producing plenty of evidence against the random assertions of his adversaries, and promising that many witnesses could be brought from Lancashire in his defense. The answer was that the Court had already condemned him.

"Sir," he had written to Lenthall, "it is a greater affliction to me than death itself that I am sentenced to die at Bolton, so that the nation will look upon me as a sacrifice for that blood which some have unjustly cast upon me, and from which I hope I am acquitted in your opinions and the judgment of good men, having cleared myself by undeniable evidence. Indeed, at my trial it was never mentioned against me. . . ."

The Court had fixed October 15 for the day of his execution, but Derby had appealed for a little respite in order to prepare himself for death, if die he must. The letters were in Charles' pouch, and he and Simon were already many hours sped upon their journey to London. Simon, indeed, had started on ahead in order to provide horses at frequent stages for Lord Strange. The prisoner tossed upon his couch following the two young

men in spirit. Fast and free they rode through the night—fast and free as he was to ride no more!

As Bradshaigh sped through the forest, hope was still strong within him.

The beeches had turned pale gold, here in the depths of the wood even the oaks were losing their green and assuming a fiery rust color, though the leaves still clung to their twigs. How many times he had ridden these woodland tracks, always maddened by anxiety. Yet it would be sweet to stroll in the wide glades with the one loved, thought Simon. His thoughts turned back to the Isle of Man, to Ann on her black pony, challenging him to a race, to Ann wandering on the grassy uplands, plucking the wild myrtle and twisting it in her hair. The very lilt of her mocking voice came back to him—yet there had been no mockery in it when he had last seen her. The young Stanleys had wept bitterly when he bade them farewell but Ann had held his hand, looking at him steadily.

“Simon, if *you* cannot find a way to save him, no one can.”

He repeated her words to himself, glowing at the thought of her trust in him.

But in London Charles’ utmost endeavors proved fruitless. His one prayer was that Lord Derby’s petition might be read to the House of Commons. But who could hear those burning words straight from the great, simple heart of the prisoner unmoved? Only Cromwell and Lenthall who secured all the copies of the petitions and decided that they should not be given to the House.

“We must return,” said Charles at last. “We can at least be with my father in his last hours.”

“That is not my thought,” rejoined Simon. “The King has landed in France, they say. My lord is in the full strength of his manhood—he *must* not die.”

All had been kept in readiness for instant departure, and Simon rode ahead as before. He would not give way to despondency—nay, he was persuaded that he could rescue his friend in the very teeth of the rebels; he would save him, no matter how great the peril. He was so strung up by excitement that he felt no fatigue, pressing on hour after hour, and leaving exhausted horses all along the road. The fire of his youth inspired him with an arrogant certitude of triumph. His plans were laid, it was only necessary to put them into execution.

CHAPTER XXIX

DERBY greeted his son affectionately on his return and thanked him warmly for the efforts he had made. He listened in silence to Charles' story of failure and then, kneeling down, clasped his hands and repeated fervently: "*Domine, non mea voluntas sed tua.*"

The act of resignation cost him much, though, when Simon presently entered, flushed with excitement and propounded his daring plan, James at first drew back. It seemed too hazardous; yet after a time he let himself be won by the young man's enthusiasm. He had many friends and adherents in the town, some even among his ostensible enemies. With the jailer's connivance he was to reach the leads above his chamber during the dark hours of that night.

Simon would be there, furnished with a long, knotted rope. Charles would be below in the street with some stout royalists who had agreed to stand by him. There was a boat upon the Dee, and Captain Leather, with a sloop, was in readiness at the seaboard. Bradshaigh was

judged the most muscular of the party; but in any case he had assigned to himself the post of greatest danger.

The scheme had been carefully prepared and worked without a hitch except that Simon found the strain of lowering the prisoner over the wall much greater than he had anticipated. He was obliged to pull up the rope and pause awhile to recover his strength. It had been prearranged that the others would not wait for him though to be discovered on the leads under the circumstances would mean instant death.

His heart had barely ceased pounding when sounds from below warned him that the sentries were on the alert, and it would be hopeless now to make the attempt.

Scarcely an hour had passed since Lord Derby had emerged from his cell, when an outburst of triumphant shouts from the street warned Simon that all had failed. Looking down, heedless of his own danger, he perceived a troop of horsemen with tossing torches coming up from the roodee, as the grassy space is called, between town wall and the river. He cast himself down, clasping his hands over his eyes that he might not see his noble friend dragged back by his enemies to die.

After a moment Simon pulled himself together. Perhaps he might contrive to slip back into Lord Derby's cell. He opened the trapdoor noiselessly and made his way down the narrow stone steps. At the foot stood the jailer who had taken his money, but who was perhaps more touched by the lad's loyalty to his chief than greedy of reward.

"They've got him," he whispered. "There was a party patrolling the riverside, and my lord waved to them thinking they were his friends. Only for that he would have got clean away. But come, look to yourself now. I can get you out through the porter's house while all

the excitement is still rife. Make haste, else it will go ill with both you and me."

So in the cold, rainy dawn, Simon slipped out into the town.

The accomplices of Lord Derby's attempted escape were never run to earth, but his captors were most liberally rewarded. The President of the Council sent down no less than three dispatches on the subject. The prisoner himself accepted his fate with quiet resignation.

"It is God's will," he said to his daughters. "I was standing free upon the strand with Moreau, while Charles had gone to search for the boat. Was it not the merest chance that these Commonwealth soldiers were wearing beavers instead of steel caps as is usual?"

The girls wept and clung to him.

"Charles should not have left you," cried Ann irrepressibly. "Where was Simon? How dared they leave you alone!"

"Hush, children—the less we speak of it the better." He added in a whisper: "Charles has managed to evade blame—he was not recognized. But Simon I left upon the roof—they tell me he has escaped into the town. I think—I fear he will not dare present himself at the Castle."

"There is very little Simon will not risk," returned Ann in the same cautious tone. "Perhaps he will try and communicate with us. If so, is there any message? Dear, dear lord, is there anything we or he can do for you?"

He looked at her sadly.

"Farewell, my almost daughter! Dear girl, you were my choice for my son."

"I loved you, but never him!" Ann's lip curled with the old saucy smile. "I think I'll never get a husband, my lord, but you will pray that—that——" She broke off, suddenly confused.

Lord Derby, a prey to his own anxiety, barely listened to her.

"Simon alone can help me," he murmured. "Yet it were death to him to come here—they must needs suspect him of assisting my escape. And yet—and yet—hark ye, draw nearer."

The three pale girls pressed close, their tearful eyes fixed upon his face.

"Tell him I would fain have speech with Master Burton's friend, or one of the same profession—he will understand."

"One of Master Burton's profession," repeated Katherine uncomprehending, but Ann bent close, her hands, icy with excitement, clutching his sleeve:

"My lord, you mean Master Nevile's companion in the island—a priest? a Jesuit?"

"Yes, my Nan, tell him a priest, any priest. If it can be managed without danger, that is to say. I want no man to risk his neck for my peace of mind."

"There are plenty who would die for you if they had but the chance," cried Amelia.

"We die for the King and duty," returned her father gravely. "And even as my own blessed King, I enjoin you—forgive your enemies and mine."

The three girls had had a dreary time, held prisoners by the Commonwealth. But they were young and light-hearted, and had managed hitherto to bear their trials with gaiety.

Ann had a tiny income of her own, derived from lands which had belonged to her dead mother, and which had escaped sequestration up to this time. Her man of business, good Mr. Langhorne in London, collected her dues, but could not convey them to her while she was in captivity. Hence she, as well as her companions, was entirely

dependent on the bounty of friends. The girls had parted one by one with their jewels to obtain food and firing.

It was evening and their one penurious little lamp was alight, when Simon presented himself in response to Ann's summons. Ann was convinced that Simon had not left the neighborhood, and, sure enough, in due course he came into the unhealthy vaulted chamber, under the Water Tower where they were immured. They all sprang up, dropping the needlework on which they had been languidly engaged. Bradshaigh was announced under his own name, but he did not remove his feathered hat until the man had withdrawn, lest the whilom groom be recognized.

"Oh, Simon, any news? Any hope?"

He shook his head sorrowfully, and after a few moments' sad talk, drew Ann aside for a word in private.

"Simon," she began at once, "my Lord Derby wishes you to find him a priest."

"Thank God!" he cried.

The other girls looked round but forebore to interrupt.

"Yes; but Simon, even should you find one, they will not let anybody in except the few gentlemen who have waited on him all the time. He desired earnestly to bid good-by to good Sir Timothy Featherstonehaugh, but they would not suffer it."

"We will find some pretext—if all else fails we will meet him on the road. Wait, let us have a signal. I have it—tell my lord not to refuse the man who shall ask to see him about the disposal of a jewel."

"I'll remember," she answered.

Simon glanced round the miserable room and began to speak quickly:

"I know you are above me by birth and all that," he said hurriedly. "And I promised my lord long ago that

I would never speak to you of marriage. But perhaps we shall never meet again ——”

“Oh, Simon, take heed for yourself—you can do no more for him now!” she interrupted passionately.

They were standing near the small barred window, and the low tumult of the River Dee, swollen by recent rains, sounded in the pauses of their speeches.

“I’ll not be foresworn I think in speaking now,” continued the young man, “for we are all in a sore plight, and I mean to ask nothing of you. Only I am afraid of your being in want of necessities, and I have no money by me. I want you to take this signet; ’twas my father’s, and ’tis heavy gold. Sir William Brereton, or one of them, will sell it for you if you are in need, for I fear pride will prevent you taking help from Charles.”

“Oh, pride! You seek then but to reprove me!” Ann drew herself up, a faint smile played over her wan little face.

“Nay, then, I’d rather you took aid from me than Charles,” owned Simon bluntly, his face reddening.

“And why, sir, may one ask?”

Ann had assumed her most nonchalant Court manner.

“Because I love you, I suppose. My heart has been like to break with love of you, ever since I drew you up from the cliff at Peel Castle and held you that moment in my arms. You’ll laugh I know that ploughman Simon should cherish such a dream; but you will take the ring, will you not, and use it if you have need?”

In silence she extended her left hand; and Simon, taking it with a touch that trembled, laid his ring in her palm.

“Farewell, my love, my dear, dear love,” he said, and suddenly falling on his knees he kissed the slender hand passionately, and then, springing up, groped his way out of the room like one stricken blind.

CHAPTER XXX

OLD Master Nevile had come to offer his services to his great neighbor, but he had not been allowed to see him. Chester was full of Catholics lying in hiding or going under assumed names: some of them belonged to the town, but most were relatives of the Catholic Cavalier prisoners with whom the jailer and churches were crowded, for Cromwell never scrupled to put religious buildings to mundane uses. Nevile had hired a little room up a narrow stairway, and here Simon sought him.

"Thank God, you are still here, Master Richard. You'll be able to tell me where there's a priest to be found. I have been out to Rixton, but the Masseys have sent away their chaplain, thinking it unsafe for him to bide here just now—he has ridden into Wales. Is Father Barwell at Greenhalgh? But alas, I fear he is too old to get upon a horse!"

"I left him ill in bed," replied the Squire. "But Simon, is it urgent? Do you think ——"

"I know nothing," returned Bradshaigh, "save this: I must find a priest to ride with me when I follow my lord from Chester to Bolton."

"You mean to go with him then? But, Simon lad, you may be recognized—implicated ——"

Simon's face looked lined and gray in the gay light of Master Richard's dancing wood fire, but there was no faltering in it.

"I would have saved him if I could," he said brokenly. "But I'll be with him, anyhow—with him to the end."

Richard Nevile nodded. He understood.

"I'll tell you all the places I know where a priest might be found," he said after a pause. "Best try up North, for the Midland counties are still narrowly watched for Army stragglers."

Drawing close to Simon he whispered in his ear, and the young man bent down from his greater height, still and tense with the effort to memorize—it was too dangerous to make written notes.

"You look worn out, my poor lad," said his old friend as they prepared to part.

"Time enough to rest—afterwards," rejoined Simon.

"Have a care, for thy mother's sake, lad."

"I'll take no harm," returned Simon. "She'll be praying for me. But oh, Master Richard, must they do him to death? Will not the folk at Bolton attempt a rescue?"

"I fear they have all lost heart, Simon. There has been so much blood spilt, and every one is in fear for their own kin. Half the folk here are Lancashire and like to perish if there is any outbreak in the county."

"The rebels think Lord Derby is detested in Bolton and have assigned his execution there, thinking to make it the more painful," observed Simon. "But know you, sir, that the folk yonder will not carry a plank or knock in a nail or sell a foot of timber? They are obliged to take the block and planks for the platform and all from here."

He looked hard at Nevile, longing to be bidden to hope, but Richard shook his head.

"I fear he must die, lad," he said, putting a kind hand on Simon's shoulder. "But 'twill be nobly and in peace with God, I trust. We must bless our Savior, child, no matter if He sends us joy or pain."

Simon seemed very young to him then, as he stood looking at him with eyes grown suddenly dim.

"Yes," said Simon hoarsely. "My Lord does so, indeed."

Friends had procured a horse for him, and the town gates being closed, Simon was lowered by a rope from

the wall into the river meadows, where his mount awaited him. It seemed to him that he had passed half a lifetime a-horse, and in truth the last few months had been largely spent in the saddle.

Liverpool was full of Government troops, and Master Nevile had said that the priest who served West Lancashire was ill a-bed. He took the road for Hoole, resolving to inquire at Warrington, and, that failing, push on further North. One of the Cliftons of Lytham had been ordained a year or two ago. Master Richard had whispered that the folk of the Fylde were his "customers." He went by the name of Norris, and Simon, having drawn blank at Warrington and Prescott, found this young Jesuit at last in the grassy uplands beyond Preston.

All the first part of the road from Chester was that which Lord Derby must needs traverse when he rode under escort to Bolton, and Simon hurried along it with a heavy heart. On the return journey, he and his companion talked little; but as they trotted across the flat green Cheshire plain and saw the red-walled town rising before them, Simon checked his horse.

"Mr. Norris, I am bound to warn you—you take your life in your hand. The troops are very bitter against folk of our persuasion."

"Blessed be God!" returned the Jesuit blithely.

Simon led on again, and the priest followed. They were both closely muffled against the bitter east wind which was blowing. As they drew nearer they perceived that the gate was open and a great crowd of people of all classes was pouring through. The hedges by the roadside too, were lined on either side. The folk were all in tears, as they gazed back into the town.

Simon pushed through the throng. He was too late, it seemed, the cavalcade had started. Here came the military escort, steel-clad with pikes in their hands, and

there in the midst rode Lord Derby, not on his own horse, but on a little trotting nag.

The people, who were said to hate him, wept and blessed him as he passed. Mr. Norris and Simon turned about and followed behind the grooms and servants.

An order was given and the horses quickened their pace, for the lamentations of the mob fell ungraciously on rebel ears. The President of the Council had proposed that the people should be allowed to execrate the prisoner; they wept and blessed him instead, which so exasperated his captors that they fell upon the defenceless mob, beating them unmercifully with the flat of their swords and pike staffs.

"What is the matter, gentlemen? Why do you treat the poor folk so ill?" asked Derby indignantly. "Here am I—you have me safe—they do not seek to molest you."

Lieutenant Smith, the officer in charge, made no answer, but ordered the column to quicken its pace.

Simon and Norris had some difficulty in keeping up, but upon Hoole Heath, scarce a mile from Chester, there was a sudden halt. After making a fruitless effort to push through the people, Simon dismounted, flung his rein to Mr. Norris, and made his way forward, with many a thrust of his sturdy arm. The road ran unfenced through a wide, desolate, marshy tract of country, where patches of heather alternated with stretches of yellow reeds. It was impossible to pass between the soldiers' serried ranks, but by climbing to the apex of an adjacent turf-stack, Bradshaigh was able to see all that was going forward.

A coach was drawn up at the side of the track; the troopers were halted round it leaving an open space in the middle of the muddy road. As he gazed, Simon saw the door burst open and the Ladies Katharine and Ame-

lia Stanley hastily alight. They were white and trembling, but no hand was held out to help them.

Lord Derby, with a little cry, sprang from his horse and cast himself upon his knees.

"My God, my God!" he cried brokenly, "bless my poor little children. God bless my poor orphans and keep them safe!"

The girls clung to him, weeping bitterly. The wind, in bitter sport, whirled their scarves about them, and raised a little eddy of the yellow birch leaves which carpeted the road. Derby prayed again, blessing his daughters, as he laid his hands lovingly on their soft locks all tossed and disordered by the strength of the blast.

Simon looked away; the scene was too sacred to be stared upon.

Presently the troop was again in motion, the coach slowly lumbering back towards Chester, and Simon, leaping down from his vantage ground found himself face to face with Mr. Humphrey Baggarley, one of Lord Derby's gentlemen who had traveled with him from the Isle of Man, and to whom he had entrusted his letter to the Countess.

"Oh, Master Bradshaigh," he cried, "this is sad indeed to witness. The poor young ladies! They were all yesterday with his lordship in his chamber, but could not bear to part with him, and seized this opportunity to bid him a last farewell."

"They seem to have no escort," observed Simon, looking after the coach.

"Nay, they have been free these three days. But the folk say they are to be taken into custody again. Ah, Master Bradshaigh, when we saw the Earl of Knowsley in all his glory, we little thought it was to come to *this*! *Sic transit gloria mundi!*"

Simon signaled to Mr. Norris.

"Sir Timothy Featherstonehaugh is to die likewise—dear me, 'twas most affecting to see my lord bid him and the other prisoners farewell. Poor Sir Timothy! He is to be beheaded at Chester and Captain Benbow is to be shot."

"Aye, aye," agreed Simon, scarcely hearkening. "Where are they stopping to-night, Master Humphrey?"

"At Leigh, I believe. You'll scarce credit me, I know, Bradshaigh," he went on, pleased to be able to relieve his mind by pouring forth his tale to sympathetic ears. "You'll scarce believe me when I tell you that while I waited upon his lordship last night, Smith presented himself with the singular request that his lordship should find some friend of his own to do that you wot of."

"What!" exclaimed Simon, startled out of his apathy of grief. "You cannot mean that they asked my Lord Derby to produce his own executioner?"

"Is it not beyond conception? But 'tis even so. My lord had obtained leave for me to wait upon him and was giving me instructions which I am to convey to my lady anent the surrender of the Isle of Man, when this Smith comes striding in with this impudent request. 'It would do well,' he says, 'if you had a friend.'"

Simon, listening with a stony face, beckoned again to the priest who was slowly making his way towards them.

"What said my poor lord?" he asked under his breath.

"What do you mean?" says he. "Would you have me find one to cut off my head?"—"Aye, my lord," says Smith, "if you could—a friend." My lord says: 'Nay, sir,' he says, stern enough, and yet with a play of laughter across his face—you know: 'Nay, sir,' he says; 'if those who want my head will not find one to cut it off, let it stand where it is.' But here's the sergeant come back for me, for I'm a prisoner still."

Simon heard no more of his voluble talk—that “play of laughter across his face!” Oh, God curse these evil times, these bloodthirsty men! Nay, his eyes lit on Mr. Norris, and all he stood for came into his mind. Groaning, he buried his face against the priest’s knee.

“Blessed be God! That is what we have to say!”

He cried it out aloud in his anguish. The priest’s tones echoed it, grave and sweet: “Blessed be God!”

CHAPTER XXXI

THE strange day wore on; in the late afternoon the cavalcade reached Leigh, and the prisoner was escorted to the quarters prepared for him. He desired to be left alone. Three persons only had been permitted to wait upon him—Lord Strange, Master Exton, his chaplain, and Captain Baggarley. They would all reappear at supper-time no doubt—Charles, with his continual self-exculpation, Exton, with his fatiguing praise and extolling of the “martyr,” and Baggarley with his blustering indignation. Now for an hour he was free of them all, yet Derby found it difficult to concentrate his thoughts, which were forever drifting away on trifles when he tried to fix them upon the great event which was to take place in a few hours’ time—his death!

He was in the prime of life, his splendid constitution had triumphed over wounds, imprisonment and anxiety. He felt no fatigue after the day’s ride; on the contrary, the fresh air and exercise had invigorated him after weeks of enforced inactivity. In spite of his philosophic cast of mind he had led a busy life, every day occupied with duties exactly fulfilled and each bringing fresh proj-

ects for the future. But now he was to die. This vigorous, useful life of his was to be laid down, and it behooved him to prepare, to meditate very seriously upon the state of his soul. Yet he found himself wondering would the new apple trees he had planted at Peel, bear fruit next year? He must remember to instruct the gardeners very particularly as to the correct method of pruning; the Manx were ignorant about such things! And then he recollected that long before the proper season came his body would be falling into dust.

Shivering involuntarily he rang for Moreau and ordered a wood fire. Where was Master Bradshaigh, he asked? The valet replied that no doubt the young gentleman was in the town, but that only his lordship's immediate followers had been allowed to enter the tavern in which he was lodged.

"And there's a man who desires to see your lordship about a jewel," he added, kneeling to blow upon the damp twigs. "He has hired a private room, and says it is of great importance to your lordship—about the disposal of a jewel of great price," he reiterated, as his master looked at him vaguely.

"Paul," he said presently, "I will wear my George to die. The Order bestowed upon me by my gracious sovereign—I will wear it on the scaffold as *his* father did his, and afterwards you will bid them give it to my son."

Afterwards—afterwards! The word made a sad, terrifying echo in his mind.

"Where shall I be *afterwards*?" he asked himself. "That will do, Moreau—leave me—leave me."

When the man had withdrawn, Derby flung himself on his knees.

"My God, I am a miserable sinner, though penitent withal! How can I present myself before Thy most pure

eyes? What shall I answer if Thou shalt ask: 'What of thy wedding garment?'"

With a groan he rose to his feet again and paced about. It seemed as though he could fix his mind on nothing. What was this that Paul had prated of? A man, with business about a jewel? Some shark, trying to get money out of him even at the last, no doubt. Yet it teased his troubled mind. Some one else had been talking to him about a jewel of late.

Before he could follow up the train of thought, his weeping followers burst in upon him again, carrying the supper-table. The dark little room was filled with tumult and James felt he must bestir himself to do what was expected of him. His first thought was ever for his wife and children. Baggarley was dispatched to get as many rings as possible, that he might bless each and wrap it up with a tender, written message for every son and daughter. At supper he must force himself to eat, lest he be thought lacking in courage. He must drink, too, to the healths of his children, one and all. There was much to be settled still—Charles to be instructed about his funeral.

"They may not let you have my body, my son, but if they do, I wish to be buried quite quietly at Ormskirk!"

How strange! Charles would be standing in his father's shoes. The eighth Earl! He looked down. One of the rose-and-tan rosettes on his footgear was loose—it must be stitched on. But no, after all what did it matter now?

"I would fain bid farewell to Simon Bradshaigh," he said aloud.

"They will not let him in, father. And it is mighty curious too—he is pressing the affair of this pestilent fellow who wants to see you about a jewel—or so he pretends!"

Lord Derby's face changed. He suddenly remembered.

"Oh, had I but known!" he exclaimed. "Aye, I will see him. Charles, contrive that I see him!"

"Who—Simon, father?" asked Charles, frowning.

"Nay, nay!" exclaimed Lord Derby eagerly. "The other—the man about the jewel!"

Strange accordingly used his influence with the officer, and Simon (his purse hastily replenished by chance-met acquaintances), with the sergeant.

And so it was arranged that the next day, as the prisoner rode to his death, the quiet man in the dark cloak rode beside him and talked with him in a low tone about the disposal of the jewel—that precious jewel which was his soul.

Bradshaigh followed behind with the grooms and footboys, and whispered to himself the hymn to the Holy Ghost:

His promise, teaching little ones
To speak and understand.

His little ones! Though a great man in the world's eyes, Lord Derby, with his simple, loving heart, might well rank among "the little ones" in the eyes of God.

"'O guide our minds with Thy blest light'—guide *his* mind, O my God! Comfort him, O divine Comforter!" prayed Simon.

Presently, after all too short an interval, Father Norris rejoined him, relating that the soldiers had pressed up about Lord Derby and forced him back, and that Lord Strange and the chaplain were now riding by him. He seemed much moved and reported that Lord Derby heard him willingly and seemed very well disposed. He had intended, he told the priest, to examine carefully into the matter of the Catholic religion, if a few more months of life had been allowed him.

"But I was able to satisfy him on all points on which he was doubtful," concluded Norris. "And I doubt not, if I can contrive to reach him once more, but that he will wish to make his confession and be received into the Church."

"Will it be necessary for him to declare it publicly, Mr. Norris? For I think he would much dread the excitement and tumult such a change would make about him at the last moment."

The priest reflected.

"No," he said at length. "I do not think he need declare it. Though of course he is free to do so if he wishes—I have no fear for myself."

His face flushed brightly, as though with joy, and a lightning recollection of Mr. Ward shot through Simon's mind. He was so tired and had been through so much that it seemed as though he could feel no more—he was deadened to further emotion. His tall figure drooped upon his jogging mount, yet as he rode he muttered doggedly from time to time: *Non mea, sed Tua*. It became a refrain, reverberating in his dulled mind, and mixing with the ceaseless thud, thud, of the slowly trotting horses. They were nearing Bolton now; people were weeping all along the road. "Not my will, but Thine."

"This gentleman has business with his lordship, will you let him pass? A crown to the lad who helps this honest merchant to speech with his lordship! Here's my purse, Mr. Norris. See, now, there's your chance! Push up to the left. Make way there! 'Not my will, not my will, not my will!'"

It seemed as though he had been riding thus for years, with a heavy, heavy heart, and the steam of the sweating horses in his nostrils. And now there were cobblestones underfoot. Bolton was reached at last, and it seemed too quick, too soon!

Angry murmurs arose among the roundheads. The platform was only half built—nothing was ready—there would be another two or three hours to wait.

The prisoner drew up before the scaffold and dismounted before his guards divined his purpose. There was a cry and a movement of alarm, but he did not heed it. Walking up to the ladder by which he was to mount to execution, he bent down and kissed it.

"This is my cross. I accept of it, O my loving Savior!"

The soldiers who were knocking the rude platform together, paused curiously. The sergeant in charge spoke sharply, and they returned to their work with redoubled zeal, or at any rate, with redoubled noise. It was feared that Derby might attempt a speech, but he straightened himself and silently remounted. He looked serene and smiling, untroubled by the gruesome preparations.

Simon pushed forward by main force, and, turning his horse loose in the crowd, struggled through the guard, and stooped to enter the low doorway of the tavern behind Lord Derby. His head was swimming with weariness.

Derby greeted him warmly, and drew him with him into the room in which he was to be confined until the grim instruments of execution were ready.

Mr. Norris had disappeared, but Charles, Baggarley and Exton were present. Derby held Simon by the arm, he was smiling brightly as he was wont to do in the old happy days before troubles had come upon him.

"All is well, Simon," he whispered. "We are fellows—I am received into the true Church of Christ. Poor boy," he added aloud, "you are monstrous tired! Lie down upon the bed and sleep. We will wake you when it is time."

"Nay, nay, my lord! Do you rest awhile," urged Simon.

"And so I will—in great peace, please God! But not yet."

He pressed Simon, still protesting, down upon the bed, murmuring as he did so: "I am happy—I am at peace. The priest will be there! He has promised to stand upon the church steps to pronounce the last absolution. God bless you, my poor boy!"

With the sound of that blessing still in his ears, Simon fell asleep, as much overcome by sorrow as by physical exhaustion. When he awoke the room was deserted and all seemed strangely still. He started up, staring about. The door was open, chairs stood disordered, there was an ink horn, and a glass half filled with wine upon the table. Simon rose to his feet. The sense of tragedy brooded upon him, but his wits were still blurred, his eyes heavy with sleep.

Lord Derby! Where was he? Could he have escaped at the eleventh hour!

Staggering to the window he looked out, and then reeled back as though he had received a blow. The market place was crowded, people hung from the windows, clustered on the rooftops; and there in the midst was the platform, scantily draped in black. Lord Derby stood upon it, talking to a sullen looking man bearing an axe. All around were ranks and ranks of soldiers with drawn swords.

In another instant, Simon found himself running, fighting his way like a madman across the square. All the people were in tears, murmuring blessings on the victim beneath their breath—they dared not speak aloud. Some of the folk tried to make way for him, believing that he bore a pardon. The troopers struck at him with the butts of their lances as he passed. He struggled towards his objective—the church steps—and came upon Mr. Norris beseeching the crowd.

"Let me by, for God's sake, let me by!"

The priest was a slight man, and in spite of his efforts was borne back by the crowd.

And then came Simon, shouldering through the people. His white face, and blazing eyes startled those who would fain withstand him, and he exerted his strength recklessly.

"Have a care, have a care!" besought Norris.

But Simon dragged him in his wake to the church steps, up them, foot by foot, until at last they stood facing the scaffold. It was not yet too late.

There was a stir in the crowd. Lord Derby had endeavored to speak to the people several times, but the escort raised an uproar which drowned his voice.

"Declare you die a martyr for the Protestant cause, my lord! Declare that you die a devoted member of the Church of England!" roared voices from the crowd.

If he heard he did not heed them, he was looking about, scrutinizing first one side of the square, then the other, his eyes ever reverting towards the church.

"He's talking to the headsman," cried a man standing next Simon. "The surly wretch will not ask his pardon. Ask pardon of his lordship!" he bawled with an oath.

Then across the square came Lord Derby's clear tones:

"Friend, I pardon thee without the asking."

At the sound of that beloved voice, Simon's heart swelled as though it must burst.

"Lift me up," said the priest in his ear—"lift me up, my son."

Simon seized him in his arms. The crowd seethed about them, some groaning and lamenting, a few jeering with evil triumph. Above the tumult Father Norris's voice rang out, his thin hand clove the air in the form of the cross: "*Absolvo te. . .*"

"Behold the head of a traitor!" cried the executioner. He had no answer save the people's tears.

CHAPTER XXXII

SPRING had come again, not with the outburst of sun and flowers which heralded it in the Isle of Man, but with a sudden softness in the air, a pearly lustre on the trailing mists, and the curlew's wild trill.

Fan, running in from the poultry yard, her curls all spangled by crystal drops, announced that she had heard the throstle singing; Grandmamma opined that "a wet February makes an empty sheepcote," and little Bab asked anxiously: "Will all brother's lambs die then? Have they to die?"

Every one laughed; Simon rejoined that it was at the end of the month, and the weather was taking up again, so maybe the proverb would not count this time; and he shot a disarming glance at the old lady. If it had been anyone but her grandson she would have felt herself challenged, but Simon could do no wrong in her eyes. She had actually allowed him to keep ewes, though Moor Grange had never carried sheep before. She listened tolerantly to his plea of the shortage of labor and the poor condition of the neglected fields.

Ever since his home coming last autumn, Simon had gone quietly and steadily about his business of farming the land. Too quietly indeed, for he had grown very silent. The five elder ladies of the family, sitting in conclave, commented upon the change in him, and his mother exclaimed with a sudden outbreak of tears: "The youth has gone out of him, my poor lad! And he not yet twenty-five!"

"Nay, Mary, nay!" answered Grandmamma pitifully. "'Tis the other way—the youth of him is eating his heart out. We can but wait and meanwhile we'll have some lasses about the house."

But when the friendly neighbors rode over with their handsome girls, Simon was often in the field or byre. If he did chance to be at home he did not notice them, as Aunt Biddy indignantly averred, "any more than if they had been chairs and tables."

"It's scarce polite, and you should tell him so, Mary," she concluded reproachfully.

But her sister-in-law smiled sadly.

"Nay, leave the lad be," she said.

Towards noon, the sun dispelled the mists. Simon, who was ploughing, paused at the end of a furrow to look about him. It was rather pleasant to be idle for a few moments in the faint warmth of the sunshine. He had discarded his coat and stood in his shirt sleeves, glancing over the hedge at the wheat field. It had looked bare and brown last night, but now in the clear light he could see innumerable little green spikes, scarce a quarter inch long, piercing the mould in every direction. The sheep were doing well, the heart of the well tilled field was full of the promise of a bountiful harvest, yet his heart felt like a stone.

"They shall come home, carrying their sheaves." The words came unbidden to his mind, and he sighed. The only sheaves that he would bear would be the prosaic material sheaves which would provide the family with daily bread. But the future, he thought could bring him nothing more—love and joy were not to be his portion.

Lady Amelia Stanley had sent word that she and her sister had been re-imprisoned, but that Lady Ann had been allowed to sail for France. This was shortly after Lord Derby's death; they were set at liberty again when the Isle of Man had been reft from the Countess by treachery.

Simon had waited upon her ladyship when she was allowed to live at Knowsley, but had not had a very

warm reception. Charlotte was embittered by the sore troubles which had fallen upon her, and her pride had suffered a cruel blow by the rumor of her husband's change of religion. Mr. Exton stoutly denied it, and her ladyship determined to do the like, and loudly proclaimed him as a martyr, for the Protestant cause. She felt no inclination, however, to question Simon on the matter, and he, for his part, judged it discreet to say nothing.

Simon thought of these things as the plough ripped through the roots of the old pasture, turning the clods neatly, and exposing the bright, damp loam beneath, all threaded with the pale shoots of springing grass. He inhaled the pleasant fragrance which the spring warmth drew out of the ground. There was the spicy smell of little crushed herbs, and the earth itself was sweet. It was the bridal season—the birds were courting in bush and tree, the larks overhead were rivals, trilling against one another. His mother had had to “chapter” Molly, the kitchen wench, only last night for the heinous crime of “sparking at the gate,” and Fan, his own sister, blushed up like fire whenever Stephen Nevile came into the room. The young man himself was in no better case.

Though it was dinner-time, Simon toiled on, anxious to finish this end of the field before stopping to eat. The men had gone home to their meal, and he was alone. It was hard work tearing through the old sod, and arms and shoulders ached as he steadied the plough, directing the plodding team by word of mouth: “Gee Blossom, aw weigh! Gee Flora!”

There was the chaffinch with his short, gay song! It was the first time he had sung the whole little air this year. The natural joy all about him saddened Simon's heart in spite of himself. There were daisies—short-stalked and pink-tipped buds at the edge of the sod,

and such a pang shot through him at the sight of them that he checked the horses involuntarily.

"My love, my love!" he groaned.

It seemed as though the very thought had evoked her. The horses stood still, hanging their patient heads. Simon, too, stood as though frozen, his hands grasping the plough-handles, his eyes bracketed upon the vision—for a vision it must surely be! There, but a hundred yards away she stood, upon the summit of the sandy bank, close by the little elder bush which was pushing forth its tufts of crimson leaves. Ann—it was Ann! Not the pale prisoner, nor yet the gay, laughing girl of the Island; this was a fine lady fresh from Paris—but it was Ann, all the same! She wore a high-crowned beaver hat with a curled brim and a long rosy feather. There were vandyked ruffles at her throat, foaming out above her furred pelisse. Bunches of curls rested on either cheek and she bore a huge muff. How slender her feet were in their high boots, freely daubed by the clay of the lane!

She stood there all alone, gazing at him, her face intent. Then as he did not move, she came towards him, springing down from the bank with a swirl of rosy silks and laces, and tripping across the mist-pearled sod. Simon watched as in a dream, pitifully glancing from her determined face to her little wet feet. He heard the rustle of her swift advance, but seemed powerless to move to meet her.

Ann paused at last, her face dimpled mischievously.

"Do you not know me, Simon?"

The words burst from him—the words which had been in his mind, ever since the chaffinch sang.

"My love, my love!"

Ann ran the last few steps and stood poised before him. She was looking down now, her dark head droop-

ing, but he could see the flushes running up her delicate bent neck. He watched her breathlessly, waiting for the word that was to bring him joy or doom.

But Ann did not speak, she only drew off her left glove slowly, slowly. And then, trembling, she held out her slender hand, with Simon's great signet ring hanging on the fine pointing finger.

"Love casteth out pride, you see, Simon," she whispered, "and so I came to seek you."

He flung himself upon his knees on the wet sod to kiss passionately the generous little hand, and then leaping up, he caught her to his breast.

"Ann is a fine lass," quoth Grandmamma approvingly. "And I think the better of her for not standing on ceremony."

"She had nobody to act for her, you see, poor child!" cried Mary eagerly. "After she was received into the Church, her father cast her off, but the Queen befriended her."

"The Queen would fain have married her to a Frenchman, I doubt," observed Aunt Biddy.

"Aye, indeed, but nothing would serve her but to return to England," chimed in Fan. "'Twas Lady Mary who was telling us all about it, for Ann's not one to praise herself."

Grandmamma Bradshaigh had the last word: "Ann's a fine lass," she repeated authoritatively. "She chose her lad and stuck to him; and God bless them both, say I!"

But it was not till two years later, when their first child was born, that Ann opened the little locket she always wore, and showed her husband the yellow curl within.

As he gazed uncomprehending, first at his son's head,

covered with dark down, then at her face, she reached up a weak hand, caught at a lock of his hair and drew his head gently down, matching the long love-lock against her secret treasure.

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